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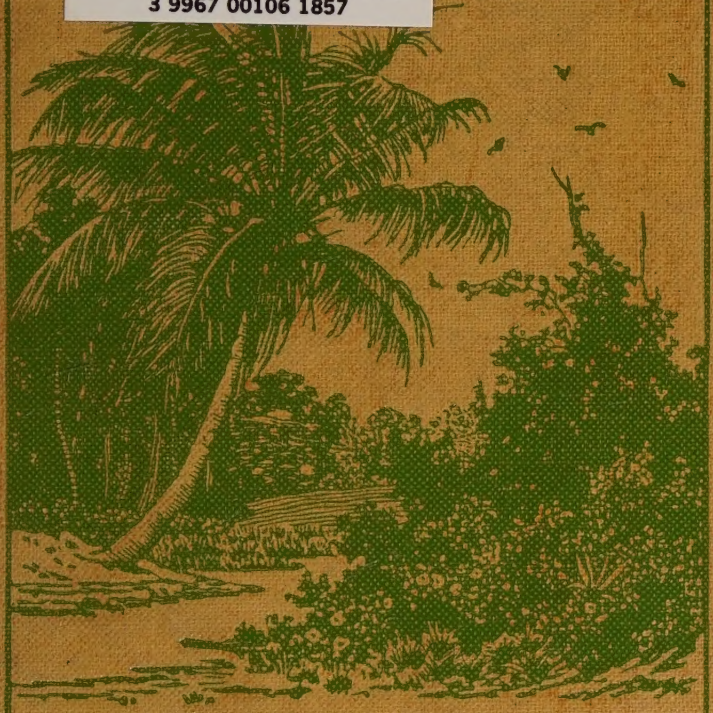

For, lo, the winter is past
The rain is over and gone

MORRIS JASTROW, Jr.

THE SONG OF SONGS

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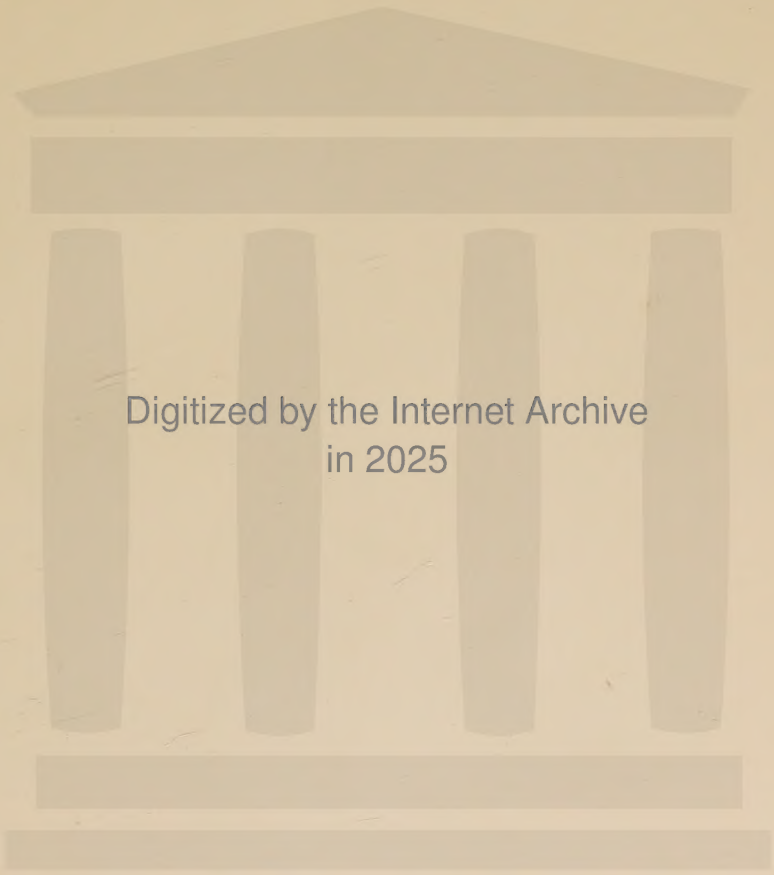
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Let us get up early to the vineyards,
Let us see whether the vine has budded;
Its blossom has opened.

Song xix, Love In The Fields

The Song of Songs

BEING

A COLLECTION OF LOVE LYRICS OF ANCIENT PALESTINE

A NEW TRANSLATION
BASED ON A REVISED TEXT

TOGETHER WITH THE ORIGIN, GROWTH AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SONGS

BY

MORRIS JASTROW, JR., PH.D., LL.D.

23359

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1921

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TO

H. B. J.

TO WHOM MY FIRST BOOK WAS DEDICATED

I INSCRIBE ALSO THIS ONE

BECAUSE ITS THEME RECALLS TO ME HER LOVING COMPANIONSHIP

WHICH HAS BEEN THE JOY OF MY LIFE

AND THE INSPIRATION TO MY CAREER

When, on June 21, my husband laid down his facile pen forever, the manuscript of the Song of Songs was practically in the shape in which it now appears. He had planned to round out the sixth chapter by giving several examples of Ancient Egyptian and Modern Palestinian Love Songs. Of these he had translated—from the Arabic—only a few extracts of the modern ditties, which are still sung by the peasants of Palestine. In order to give the reader some idea of how closely they resemble the Biblical love songs, I have added them at the end of the book. It is my hope that the comparison of these extracts with my husband's translation of the Song of Songs will tend to confirm his interpretation of the Biblical book—as a collection of *secular* love songs.

A seventh chapter on "The Song of Songs as Literature" was included in the original plan of the work. It seems more fitting that this chapter be omitted than that it be written by another.

It is a great satisfaction to me to feel that the Trilogy to which my husband had devoted so many years of ardent and joyful study, should have been so nearly completed,—in his own words—"Job, the most philosophical, Ecclesiastes, the most fascinating, and the Song of Songs the most charming book of the Old Testament."

Rev. Dr. Royden Keith Yerkes has been good enough to read a proof, as well as to verify the many references, and Dr. Chas. J. Mendelsohn has also read a proof. To both these friends I am deeply grateful.

HELEN B. JASTROW

OCTOBER, 1921

FOREWORD

HE Song of Songs is one of the smallest books of the Old Testament. It consists in the conventional subdivision of the text of eight chapters with a total of only 117 verses. And yet this little book has been the subject of more controversy than perhaps any other production of similar size. There are almost as many theories about its origin and its nature as there have been commentators who have attempted to explain it, from the Rabbis in the Talmud on the one hand and from Origen in the third century of our era on the other, down through the Middle Ages to our own days. There has generally been a sharp cleavage between Jewish exegetes and Christian theologians in the interpretation of the book, though occasionally in each camp a scholar arose who freed himself from the besetting sin of Biblical exegesis at all times to read *into* the text instead of to read *out* of it. If we look a little closer, we will find that a number of assumptions in connection with the book have proved to be stumbling blocks in the way of a correct interpretation, such as the supposed Solomonic authorship of the book, the assumption that it is a literary unit, the supposition that Solomon enters into the book as a participant, the belief that there is a hidden meaning running throughout it, or that from

the literary point of view it falls within the category of the drama, and the equally persistent preconception that the book, because it has found a place in a sacred canon, must be the vehicle of some higher teachings. It will be my aim to show that in the course of the discussion all of these suppositions must be set aside—in order to clear the way for a correct view of the book.

The Solomonic authorship is a pure tradition, that arose at a time when the Hebrews fell under the influence of the Greek view of individual authorship for literary compositions and entered upon a hunt for authors for productions that were the outcome of the ancient oriental mode of literary production which was essentially collective and anonymous.[1]

The association of Solomon with the Song of Songs, as though he were a participant in the situation unfolded in the book, rests upon the incidental mention of Solomon in the last chapter (8, 11-12) and upon the identification of the king, mentioned a number of times in the book (1, 4 and 12) with Solomon as the king *par excellence*. This identification led to adding the name Solomon after "king" in two other places (3, 9 and 11). But as will be shown, "king" is the designation still given in parts of modern Syria to the "bride-groom" as the central figure in the wedding festivities. The real Solomon plays no part whatsoever in the book.

Once, however, the name of Solomon having become attached to the book by a fanciful association,

[1] See the further exposition of this view in the author's *A Gentle Cynic*, pp. 31-61, and in his *Book of Job*, pp. 49-51, and 64-66.

it was necessary to give an interpretation to the book that would be in keeping with the dignity of the most royal figure in Hebrew history who becomes the embodiment of honor or wisdom. It was inconceivable that Solomon should be the author of a collection of mere love songs; still less that he should be represented as the king who is madly in love with a peasant girl whom he seeks to add to his harem and who, it would further appear, resists the allurements of the royal lover.

The Solomonic authorship thus led to giving a deeper meaning to what on the surface appeared to be purely erotic scenes and passionate outbursts. The allegorical interpretation eased the conscience of the pious who were thus relieved of the embarrassment of apologizing for the presence of apparently secular poetry in a sacred collection. Once launched on the course of allegorical exegesis, the variations on the main *motif* were almost endless. Each commentator as he arose suggested modifications of the theory and introduced elaborations which formed the bridge for semi-philosophical and semi-mystical interpretations. Aristotelian concepts were read into the dialogues between lover and beloved by the side of efforts to see in the passionate longing of the youth for the maiden the desire of the soul to be united with God.

When the allegorical and mystical interpretation was finally abandoned, scholars still clung to the supposed association of the book with Solomon—without stressing the actual authorship—and so there arose the endeavor to find an incident—real

or fanciful—in the life of Solomon running through the book. The dramatic theory—likewise in a number of varieties—became the heir of the allegorical and mystical interpretation. The theory proved to be a Will o' the Wisp which, however, many scholars of our own times still persist in pursuing. Apart from many other objections to it, it falls to the ground if it can be shown that the Song of Songs does not represent a literary unit, and that Solomon does not enter the book as a participant.

Equally fateful for an understanding of the book were the attempts to detect religious teachings of a moral character in the Song of Songs, though we must recognize the service rendered by those who advocated this view insofar as they helped to bring about the final rejection of the totally misleading allegorical interpretation, and to bring into the foreground the literal interpretation. The strong impetus given to rationalism which began with the close of the eighteenth century and led to the application of the historical method to the elucidation of ancient texts, cleared away the cobwebs that had gathered around the Biblical books and enabled scholars to undertake the task of following the growth of both the Old and the New Testaments, without being hampered by traditional assumptions and by theological predilections which were in many cases only slightly differentiated from theological prejudices. It was felt that the books of the sacred collection must be viewed primarily as human and as historical documents if we were to penetrate to their religious significance. The starting-point in the case of the

Song of Songs must, therefore, be to take the book for what it clearly is, a continuous ecstasy on the theme of sexual love.

It is from this point of view that the Song of Songs is treated in this volume, and it follows almost as a necessary corollary that the Song of Songs consists of a series of independent songs, all dealing with the one theme, which were brought together into a little anthology by some editor, or more probably by some editors, who *may* have intended to give a semblance of literary unity to the collections. If that was the case,—and the question is one to which a categorical answer can hardly be given—the unity is purely artificial, by which I mean that the separate songs to be distinguished are originally independent compositions and that any attempt to string them together spoils their beauty and interferes with their understanding and appreciation. For the songs are folk-songs, and folk-poetry does not indulge in elaborate composition. It is marked rather by its brevity—by its limitation to one or two thoughts or or to a few pictures, not by a long train of thought carried through with logical precision, such as marks a literary composition produced with conscious and persistent effort. The folk lyric suggests the brevity of the love kiss and the fleetingness of the love sigh. What has been set forth by me in a previous volume[2] of the anonymous and collective character of all except the very latest books of the Old Testament applies with special force to the Song of Songs. There is no author in our sense of the word to the

[2] *A Gentle Cynic*, p. 31 *seq.*

Song of Songs. All the songs are expressions of folk emotions. They voice the joy felt by the young on the awakening of passionate love; and the popularity which the songs must have enjoyed and which led to their preservation was due to the response that they found in the hearts of those who heard them and sang them. The poet who thus gives voice to emotions felt by all becomes merely the mouthpiece of the clan to which he belongs, or of the village into the life of which he enters along with his fellows. We cannot therefore, properly speak of an author or of authors in connection with these songs, any more than there are specific authors to the folk-tales and fairy tales which in all lands pass from mouth to mouth and are finally given a permanent form by some one whose personality is kept in the background, because he is merely a medium for an entire group.

Regarding the songs in this way as so many independent compositions, I have discarded in the translation the usual division into chapters, though as a convenience and for purpose of comparison with the original text or with translations made by others, I have indicated the chapter and every fifth-line verse on the margin, as was done in "A Gentle Cynic" and in my "Book of Job." I have also added a designation to mark each one of the twenty-three little songs that I distinguish in the collection so as to indicate to the general reader the aspect of the theme touched upon in each song. I have no doubt that in some instances better ones may be suggested.[3]

[3] See, *e. g.*, the subtitles suggested by Herder for the 22 songs into which he divided the book (*Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Suphan, vol. 8, pp. 627–628).

My aim has been to select such designations as would reflect the thoroughly popular character of the songs. The further we get away from the idea that we are dealing with delicately refined and polished compositions, the nearer will we come to the *spirit* of the songs. They do not represent grandiose poetry like the Symposium in Job or like the Nature Poems added as a third stratum to the Book of Job;[4] they betray no profound thought nor striking originality as do the reflections of Koheleth. They are certainly not to be compared with the exquisite and sublime poetry of the Psalms, nor are they literary gems such as are many of the sayings in the Book of Proverbs. They must be taken for what they were intended—simple little songs that make their appeal by their genuine reflection of the folk spirit exercising itself on a theme of thoroughly human and therefore of universal appeal. We must look upon the songs as we would on the simplest kind of ballads, scarcely touched by the polishing efforts of the self-conscious poet.

There may be some of my readers who may feel offended by the undisguised outbursts of passionate love in the songs, by the pointed allusions to sexual delights, and by the many metaphors that are unmistakably erotic, as set forth in the notes to my translation. Those who may receive a shock by this endeavor faithfully to reproduce the joyous spirit of the original, I would refer to the sections in the discussion of the book in which I dwell upon the naïveté of this folk poetry as its dominant trait. This naïveté

[4] See the author's *Book of Job*, pp. 82–86.

deprives the songs of any suspicion of salaciousness or vulgarity; it exhibits their sincerity and simplicity.

Folk poetry is always direct, free from subtlety and without any ulterior motive. It is realistic in the best sense as not being ashamed to reveal the feelings inspired by healthy and normal love, but it is never vulgar. Obscenity in erotic poetry is the outcome of self-consciousness, but folk poetry is marked by an absence of self-consciousness. We must look on these little songs, as we should look on the charming folk tales and tribal traditions in the Book of Genesis. No one but a prig thinks of stressing the factor of deception when Jacob steals the blessing from Esau by a clever trick; or concludes from the evident and naïve glee with which a story teller narrates how Rachel conceals the stolen idols from her father, that the story is an immoral one. The folk spirit in its desire to tell how its favorites always get the better of their opponents loses sight of the moral factor. The flavor of such tales as Joseph's dreams which foreshadowed the superior position of the Joseph tribe over his brother clans is lost the moment that we begin to ask questions either of a skeptical or of a moral character. A folk tale is not necessarily a Sunday School story; and when it touches on human relations, it is primarily and generally exclusively human—and not æsthetic or moral. Folk lyrics are intended for the simple folk among whom they originate. They are for home consumption, not for literary export, and unless we can throw aside our sophisticated spirit of critical analysis, we must abandon the hope of entering into the joy and charm-

ing simplicity of such a collection as the Song of Songs. To read folk lyrics through the spectacles of an over-ripe and jaded age is to see obscenity where there is merely naïveté; and if we inject a moral interpretation as an escape from supposed obscenity we add pharisaical obtuseness to an exhibition of vitiated taste. It was just because the seriously minded but unimaginative Rabbis of the Talmudic Age were no longer able to appreciate the folk spirit which produced the Song of Songs that they took refuge in an allegorical interpretation; and their example was followed by the church fathers and early Christian theologians, who condemned Theodore, the Bishop of Mopsuestia, who stands out in his age—the fourth century of our era—as the one exegete who proposed to take the Song of Songs at its face value—as a collection of simple unadorned love lyrics. Read as such, the twenty-three songs intowhich I have divided the book, form one of the most precious as well as one of the most charming legacies of the remote past. They afford us a picture of a phase of life which is only occasionally touched upon in the pages of the Bible—sometimes in the Book of Proverbs, and here and there in the tales of Genesis, but nowhere with the grace and the poetic glow of the Song of Songs. Let us, then, enjoy the songs as outbursts of the joy of life which reaches its full measure in the sigh of the lover at his heart's desire and in the longing of the maiden to be united with her swain. Love as the most primitive instinct is also the most enduring, though perhaps its fullest appreciation can come only in retrospect of

the period in every one's life when love was (or seemed to be) the most absorbing emotion. Perhaps this was what some sage had in mind in advising that one should not read the Song of Songs until one had passed his thirtieth year. At thirty, the ebb tide of passion sets in and we begin to recall its surging roar, once so loud as to shut out all other sounds; and as the years slip by and the approach of evening is heralded by the lengthening shadows, one can read the Song of Songs with perhaps increased appreciation—provided that we have kept our hearts young enough to sympathize with youthful passion and are able in our imagination to live our own youth over again.

Let us try to think of the Song of Songs as forming a part of a sacred collection not by an accidental admission to their present place or by a majority vote of a solemn assembly of learned pedants but—as I shall aim to set forth—because of their irresistible popular appeal to which pedantry was forced to yield. The Song of Songs in a sacred collection comes to reinforce the instinctive conviction of mankind that human love *is* sacred even in its passionate manifestations, when not perverted by a sophisticated self-analysis.

Lastly a few words as to my translation. In the endeavor to produce an accurate version of the original text—accurate so far as it is possible to interpret a text that passed through many vicissitudes before reaching its final form—the first requisite is to exercise one's critical instinct in purging the text of obvious errors on the part of copyists and of removing glosses and little comments which in the case of all the books

of the Old Testament, have crept into the text. May I remind the reader—referring him at the same time to fuller statements in previous volumes [5]—that in an ancient oriental book the distinction to which we are accustomed between the body of the text and the marginal additions or the footnotes does not exist. A text being put together not for the purpose of circulating it—as is done in the days of printing—but for preserving it, or to act as a guide in reading it or in reciting it to others, variant words and phrases as well as all kinds of explanatory comments and additions were embodied by the editors who left it to the one who used the text to distinguish between what was original and what was supplementary. Very often—as was pointed out in my discussion of Koheleth and Job— the gloss was introduced to tone down some objectionable assertion, or a comment was added to divert thought into a more orthodox channel. Not infrequently the comment suggested the answer to some argument; in other cases it served a purely explanatory purpose. In our collection of songs, outside of the addition of the name of Solomon to the word 'king' as above noted and which reflects the endeavor to connect the songs with the *grand monarque* of Israel, there are few interferences with the original text made with the intent to give a certain turn to the lyrics. But there are quite a number of insertions which represent variant readings or little comments. These can be picked out because they interfere with the rhythmical measures to be recognized in a subdivision of the songs, precisely as in the

[5] See *A Gentle Cynic*, pp. 71–101 and *The Book of Job* pp. 64–66.

Book of Job we were thus able to pick out superfluous words and phrases or even entire lines, because of their interference with the rhythm.[6] For the Song of Songs I follow, with some exceptions, the results reached by a distinguished Old Testament scholar, J. W. Rothstein, whose *Grundzuege des Hebräischen Rhythmus*, represents a most valuable contribution to this very difficult subject. I have attached to each of the twenty-three songs the rhythmical measure, of which there are four kinds to be distinguished.[7] Again, there are actual repetitions in one song of a line or sometimes several lines taken over from another song. This is a characteristic feature of folk poetry everywhere. Since there is no definite author associated with any folk song, an interchange of phrases or lines is natural. These repetitions must be removed in order to secure a smoother and more satisfactory text. Occasionally also, but only occasionally, a line or a verse has slipped into a wrong place and we obtain a better sense by restoring it to its proper position. Such an inversion, however, is to be assumed only when a real difficulty is apparent and which can be solved by recourse to this method. To rearrange the entire book as some modern translators of the Song of Songs have done, is objectionable, for even if it be granted that we obtain a better sequence by such a radical procedure, it is not the function of a commentator of an ancient book to rewrite it as he thinks that it should have been written

[6] See the author's *Book of Job*, p 99 *seq.*, for a full explanation of the rhythm in the poetical portions of the *Book of Job* (chap. 3 to 42, 6) the lines of which consist throughout of hemistichs of three beats each.

[7] Set forth in chapter VI dealing with this subject.

and then further delude himself into the belief that the author wrote it in that way. Such a method is not critical but arbitrary; it is as vicious as the habit of commentators of an earlier school to read *into* a text what they would like to find there or what they think that the authors should have said. It is inconceivable that an ancient text and especially a collection of songs should have been so hopelessly confused as to have come down to us in a completely topsy-turvy form; and if a text is so unintelligible as to necessitate a complete rearrangement, then at a remove of 2000 years from the time when it became so hopelessly confused, it is also hopeless for us to try to reconstruct it. All deviations from the revised text are carefully indicated in the notes to the translation. In most cases even the lay reader can decide whether the revised text is an improvement or not.

A different question is involved in the deviation of my translation from the classic Authorized or King James Version of 1611 and which is due in most cases to our improved knowledge of the meaning of Hebrew words and phrases over that of 300 years ago. It were surprising and sad if it were otherwise; and I plead again, as I did in the *Book of Job*, [8] that the reader should not lose sight of the fact that the Authorized Version is after all a *translation*. Because it is an English classic, we should not be blind to the fact that when a translation is erroneous, it *must* be set aside even though the elimination of the error spoils the beauty of the style. It should, of course, be the aim of the modern translator to give to his revised and

[8] Foreword, p. 8 *seq.*

more correct version the literary quality that distinguished the Authorized Version. He may succeed in this aim or he may fail, but a reader who approaches a new translation with a prejudice, *because* it deviates from one to which he has become accustomed is hardly in a frame of mind capable of judging a new translation. I have felt this prejudice in the views expressed by some of my critics in regard to my translation of Koheleth and more particularly in regard to my translation of the Book of Job. I have no quarrel with those who sing the praises of the Authorized Version. I yield to no one in my admiration for it from the point of view of stylistic purity and impressive musical diction, but if the Bible is to make its appeal to the age in which we live, the preliminary condition is that we must have for all of the books a correct translation or as nearly a correct one as we can make. Perpetuating the errors of an older translation is the most certain way of securing an ever diminishing respect for the original. Let us continue by all means to emphasize the extraordinary beauty of the Authorized Version. It is gratifying to note that the eloquent appeal made by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch in his recent volume, "On the Art of Reading," for according a proper place in the college curriculum to the study of this version as an integral part of English Literature is meeting with an encouraging response. Shakespeare and the Authorized Version should form part of the prescribed work in the English course of every college, but let us impress upon the students that they are reading and studying the version because of its style, and not as a translation

to which an appeal is to be made as though it were the court of final resort to pronounce upon what the *original* text intended to convey; and let us also not conceal the fact that in thousands of passages the text from which the Authorized Version was made stands in need of correction, and in the majority of cases can be corrected with a reasonable assurance of our obtaining the text, if not in its original form, at least in a more intelligible form.

Finally, in the discussion of the Origin, Growth and Interpretation of the Song of Songs, I have tried to touch upon all the important questions that have been raised in connection with the book. As in my Book of Job and A Gentle Cynic, so this discussion and translation of the Song of Songs are intended for the intelligent reader, not primarily for the specialist. I have taken this reader into my confidence and tried to guide him to an appreciation and a correct estimate of this precious little collection of old Palestinian love lyrics. I have done this in the hope of being able also to convey to him the sense of pleasure and delight which I have experienced in devoting so many years of study to this precious anthology.

To Mr. E. S. Holloway I am again indebted for the artistic cover designed by him. The charming frontispiece which gives the key to the theme of all the songs,—"the way of a youth with a maiden"—is taken from Alexander Bida's exquisitely poetic and artistic illustrations—twenty-six in all—added to a republication of Ernest Renan's translation of *Le Cantique des Cantiques* (Paris 1885) and of which an American edition was published by the J. B. Lippin-

cott Co. in 1887, the translation of the Revised Version of 1881 being used as the text. In contrast to earlier illustrations of the Song of Songs, of which there are a large number, but which were all made under the influence of the allegorical interpretation, Bida's pictures illustrate the songs as love poems, hot and passionate but also pure and simple. My friend and colleague, Professor Clarence G. Child, of the English Department of the University of Pennsylvania, was again kind enough—as in the case of my translation of the Book of Job—to give my rendering of the Song of Songs the benefit of his expert judgment and I owe to him a number of valuable suggestions.

It remains for me again, as in the case of all my writings, to give expression to my feeling of gratitude to my wife for her valuable aid in reading the manuscript and the proof, and even more for her ever sympathetic interest. That aid and interest have furnished the stimulus which one needs in order to persevere in his work and to keep his ideals before him, however much one may be conscious of falling short of the perfection towards which his aim is directed.

MORRIS JASTROW Jr.

University of Pennsylvania
June 16, 1921

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PART I

THE ORIGIN, GROWTH AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SONG OF SONGS

The Song of Songs

CHAPTER I

LOVE LYRICS IN A SACRED COLLECTION

I

FAR cry from Ecclesiastes and Job to the Song of Songs, from the study of the "Gentle Cynic" touching lightly on life's paradoxes, and the closet of the philosopher brooding over life's tragedies, to the open fields, the smiling vineyards and shady groves in which the poet's fancy may expand as processions of singing youths and dancing maidens, happy in the consciousness of the hot blood coursing through their veins, pass before his vision. Away with sombre thoughts, the poet calls, away with disturbing reflections on the vanity of life that come as the years approach of which one says "I have no pleasure in them," away with the hopeless attempt to penetrate the mystery of human existence that brings little comfort to one's soul. Out into the fields to see "the vines in blossom and the pomegranate in flower." When all the woods are green, and soft breezes stir the leaves and shadows dance in the sunlight, there is room for only one thought—the joy of life— and one emotion—love as the supreme manifestation of that joy.

Such is the mood that pervades the little collection of ancient Palestinian love lyrics to which the very appropriate designation "Song of Songs" was given by some editor who put the finishing touches to this "Palestinian Treasury of Lyric Verse" as we might also call it—a "Song of Songs" not in the sense in which the designation is currently taken as though constituting the choicest of songs but rather one continuous song of the ecstasy of human love, produced by the combination of a considerable number of independent little songs or snatches of songs. The designation well describes the unity in the collection—a unity of theme and of setting, but not of literary composition.

The theme throughout is youthful love, passionate love, "the way of a youth with a maiden," which Agur[1] (Prov. 30, 19) found as mysterious "as the flight of an eagle in the air" and as graceful as "the way of a ship in the midst of the sea."

The setting likewise throughout the collection is in the fields, in the groves, in the vineyards, in the gardens, in the open villages of the plain or mountains, with all the beauties of nature close at hand.

> "The beams of our house are cedars,
> Our rafters are cypresses."

The pictures in the songs are chosen from country life, from the brooks to which the flocks are brought for washing, from the mountains in which the soul

[1] Agur's unconcealed approval of passionate love was too much for a pious commentator who, in an addition (v. 20) applies the beautiful saying to "the way of the adulterous woman" which is the last thing that Agur had in mind.

feels free. The bridal procession moves across the meadows, and the maidens dance in the camp circle.

Only occasionally and quite exceptionally do we encounter a reference to city life, as in "the watchmen that go about the city" (3, 3 and repeated 5, 7) or in the adjuration addressed to the "Maidens of Jerusalem"(in the manner of a refrain 1, 5; 2, 7; 3, 5; 5, 8; 8, 4; and 3, 11, variant "Maidens of Zion") or in the purely incidental mention of Damascus (7, 5) and of Jerusalem and Tirzah (6, 4).

As the theme is one of unusual appeal, so there is nothing specifically Hebraic or Jewish in its treatment, with the exception of the three *certain* references to King Solomon[2] as the "grand monarque" of Israel. The name of the national Deity of the Hebrews is nowhere introduced, and there is no allusion to any event in Hebrew history. No specifically Hebraic customs are referred to. There is no mention of any religious belief or rite or any suggestion of a religious thought. The poet passes outside of the limits of Hebrew settlements for the settings to his pictures, to the Lebanon district in the North (4, 8, 11, 15) to Heshbon in the East (7, 5) to Kedar (1, 5) as a general designation for Arabia. Local references within Palestine proper are confined, outside of the mention of Jerusalem, to Gilead (4, 1) to the village of Shulam or Shunem[3]

[2] 1, 5 "hangings of Solomon" in the sense of royal hangings, and 8, 11 and 12, the vineyard of Solomon. See the comment to the passages. In the heading to the collection (1, 1) the words "which is Solomon's" are an editorial addition reflecting the later tradition of Solomonic authorship. Similarly, in 3, 7, 9 and 11, Solomon represents an addition, as is shown by the metrical arrangement. See the notes to the passages in question.

[3] See the note to the passage.

(7, 1)—just enough to suggest that some of the songs must have originated among the Hebrews—some, not necessarily all. The general and non-specific character of these lyrics is their outstanding feature; and this character justifies us in speaking of the collection as a whole as Palestinian rather than Hebraic. The analogies with old Egyptian love songs, and with Arabic folk-poetry of our days[4] strengthen the impression that the Hebrew form of the songs is accidental. They might have been written in Arabic, in Moabitic or in any other Semitic dialect spoken in the lands around Palestine; nor is it improbable that *some* of the songs may be translations or adaptations of lyrics originally composed in some other language than Hebrew.

II

How did it happen that such a distinctly secular and not specifically Hebraic production found its way into a collection of sacred writings? How, indeed?

If we accept the traditional view of the Song of Songs, the answer is simple. The Song of Songs is an allegory. The picture of human love is a disguise for a divine theme. The lover is not a rustic swain—it is Yahweh himself and the beloved maiden is Israel, chosen by Yahweh as his bride. The tradition could point by way of confirmation to the Hebrew prophets who introduced the same metaphors drawn from human relations to illustrate Yahweh's attitude towards his people.[5] But the allegorical interpreta-

[4] See p. 245.
[5] See further in chapter III.

tion, as will be shown, arose as the explanation of the Song of Songs, *because* of the secular character of the songs which was so manifest on the surface. The Song of Songs viewed as an allegory was a theory of despair that suggested itself, one might say *forced* itself, upon the pious Rabbis of the early centuries of our era in order to satisfy their consciences in having a series of love songs in a collection of books that had by its intimate association with the religion of the people acquired a sacred and inviolate character. The allegorical theory thus becomes an additional testimony to the secular character of the songs, recognized as such by those who tried their best to conceal it—to explain it away by *superimposing* a theory that only enhances the difficulties of the problem. The question must therefore be faced directly —how came a collection of love lyrics to form part of the canon of the Old Testament?

We are not well informed of the manner in which this canon—by which is meant the official recognition both of the books constituting the sacred writings of the Jewish Church and of their authentic form—was finally established. The picture that one generally has in mind of an assembly of serious minded long-bearded scholarly Rabbis gathering at some centre like Jamnia (some thirty miles west of Jerusalem) about the year 90 A. D. to vote on the books to be included, is certainly erroneous. If such an assembly ever took place, which is more than doubtful, it faced a *fait accompli*. It could only put its stamp of final approval upon what had in the course of time

and by general consensus come to be regarded as worthy of a place in a permanent collection of products of the past. We come nearer to the real situation if we assume three factors as bringing about a natural selection from the literature whose sacrosanct character was the result of an extended process. The first of these factors is the stamp of authority acquired by such a group as the five books forming the Pentateuch which contained the laws regarded as the very foundation of the religion, and by the collection of the utterances of the prophets, steadily assuming larger proportions through additions and through constant re-editing. The teachings of the prophets were regarded as illustrating and supplementing the laws. Hence, as lay gatherings for the study of the law became customary during the centuries before our era, and a ritual for the Sabbath and holy days as well as for the weekday gatherings was evolved, the law and the prophets acquired a definitely sacred character because associated with the religious life of the people. The second factor was the growing interest aroused during the post-exilic period in everything connected with the history of the people. This interest had its outcome in embodying the various codes to be distinguished in the Pentateuch in a framework of historical tradition. It led, to be sure, to entirely uncritical views in regard to the origin of the laws, but the historical interest, nevertheless, prompted the gathering of documents dealing with the long and eventful history of the Hebrews from the conquest of Canaan to the end of the two monarchies, c. 1150 to 580 B. C. These documents, dovetailed into one

another, passed through the hands of many editors, who added glosses and comments and otherwise expanded and embellished the narratives in which fact and fancy were blended into a semblance of literary unity which resulted in giving us the historical books proper of the Old Testament. The narratives likewise assumed an authoritative position by their popular appeal to the religious spirit of the Jewish communities now scattered throughout Palestine. A third factor was the glamour associated with the great names of the past, with David and Solomon, with Moses as well as with more nebulous figures like Noah, Daniel and Job.[6] This association was further stimulated by the gradual advance from anonymous and collective authorship to the attachment of the name of an individual to a literary production. The movement may be traced back to the days of the pre-exilic prophets who, although speakers and not writers, yet stamped their utterances with their individuality in a manner that gave a personal color to their impressive words. The prophets when they changed from speakers to writers became the first genuine authors among the Hebrews.[7] Writing, instead of being merely a medium of presenting what some one had spoken or sung, came to be looked upon as a *direct* expression of what an individual wished to convey. The writer dominated his material, instead of being controlled by it; and when the Jews after the middle of the fourth century before our era came under the influence of the Greek emphasis on indi-

[6] See the four significant passages in Ezekiel 14, 14, 16, 18 and 20 and the comment on them in my *Book of Job*, p. 145.

[7] See *A Gentle Cynic*, pp. 48–57.

vidual authorship, the Jews likewise were led to associate individuals with the literary treasures of their past. This association, as has been pointed out elsewhere,[8] was as uncritical as the view taken by tradition of the history of the nation and of the growth of religious ideas and institutions, but it led to the preservation of such books as Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs because the magic name of Solomon became attached to these productions, though entirely without warrant. Similarly, the name of Daniel became attached to the book which bears his name and which is in a preeminent degree composite in character, the work of perhaps as many as six different writers.

The combination and interplay of these three factors resulted in preserving for us the books that eventually formed the Old Testament. Most of the books were intrinsically bound up with the religious traditions, thoughts and aspirations of the people; and if some productions like the sayings of Ben Sira—known as Ecclesiasticus—and the Books of the Maccabees did not find their way into the canon (though there was no inherent reason why they should not have been included), it was in part due to the late date of their production, but in larger part because they had not attained sufficient popularity to receive the impress of popular authority. "The wind bloweth where it listeth;" and one cannot hope to penetrate the subtle workings of the popular mind so completely as satisfactorily to account for the reason why certain books became classics by general consent,

[8] *A Gentle Cynic*, pp. 52–56.

while others did not attain that distinction. The important point for us to bear in mind is that in the case of the books of the Old Testament, the final court of appeal was not a body of learned scribes, carefully weighing the pros and cons, but the silent process of popular approval, reinforced by a growing tradition gathering around certain productions of the past. We must be content if we can succeed in detecting some of the factors involved in this process.

III

A question that needs to be discussed at this juncture is whether it was the popularity of the lyrics comprised in the Song of Songs that led to the identification of the "King" mentioned in them with Solomon and which further entailed the actual insertion of the name of Solomon in certain passages,[9] or whether the association with Solomon enhanced the popularity of the songs.

The songs must have made a strong popular appeal that extended even into an age as serious and as austere as that which marks the life of the Jews in the post-exilic period after the partial restoration of the national life, though much cramped and restricted by a foreign political supervision. There had to be some outlet for higher feelings. Religion could not absorb all the interests of the people, and we assuredly obtain a distorted picture if we imagine life in Palestine to have been at any time entirely sombre without its brighter hues.

[9] See further, chapter III.

An agricultural people such as the Jews were, always had its spring festivals and its harvest festivities. The religious feasts of post-exilic Judaism are all superimposed on a background of agricultural divisions of the year. The three chief festival seasons coincide with the ripening of barley in the early spring, with the wheat harvest on the approach of the summer solstice, and with the fruit harvest in the fall. Historical traditions were associated with these three seasons. The Exodus from Egypt was connected with the spring festival, the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai with the summer festival, and the recollection of the nomadic period in the people's remote past with the harvest festival in the fall. These associations represent later strata in order to give a religious import to these popular celebrations in keeping with the subsequent religious development. Traces of the older and more joyous character of these festivals survive in many of the rites sanctioned by the Jewish authorities. The Talmud [10] retains a curious reference to the custom of the young people going out into the vineyards to dance at the close of the most austere holy day in the calendar—the Day of Atonement or the tenth day of the harvest month in the fall—a clear indication of a totally different character that this day once had. Where the dance is, the song is also to be found; and where the young congregate, the theme of passionate love seeks for an expression. The ancient Hebrews, like every agricultural people, must have had their harvest songs, their spring and summer ballads, their love lyrics, and when viniculture took its place by the

[10] Taanith IV, 8.

side of agriculture, also their drinking songs, just as the Hebrew tribes in earlier days had their war songs, celebrating the exploits of the favorite heroes. The song of Deborah, a very ancient composition, inserted in the Book of Judges (Chap. 5) is a specimen of such a war song; likewise the little song inserted in the book of Numbers (Chap. 21, 27-30). We know of at least two collections of national songs, "The Book of the Wars of Yahweh" [11] and "The Book of Yashar" [12] that were probably made in the early days of the monarchic period and that may well have survived into post-exilic days. In some of the Psalms we may detect the popular note of pure joy in the presence of nature, as in the 19th, in which an old nature poem (verses 2-7) has been grafted onto a later and more serious, though equally enthusiastic praise of the Law of Yahweh, while the basis of the 45th Psalm appears actually to have been an old love lyric, celebrating the grace of the bridegroom [13] and the beauty of the bride, [14] which has been reworked and adapted to the style of religious hymn for the post-exilic community.[15]

Precisely then as we find scattered throughout the books of the Old Testament, folk tales, tribal

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[11] Referred to Numbers 21, 14.

[12] II Samuel 1, 18. The term "Yashar" though conventionally translated "upright" may actually have connoted a "Song" anthology.

[13] Verses 3–4, 9–10.

[14] Verses 11–16.

[15] The Psalm may have been a wedding song put together from older folk lyrics for some special occasion—perhaps a wedding in the royal family. Then subsequently it was converted into a religious hymn. Complicated as such a process might appear to us, it accords with the method of literary production in the ancient and even the later East. Early Arabic poems, largely anonymous, are recast in the same way and adapted to later post-Mohammedan conditions.

anecdotes, fanciful stories of the popular heroes, snatches of poems that betray their folk origin, martial songs, preserved and embodied in a framework of sober narrative, not by chance but because of their popular appeal which led to their preservation, so we must look upon the collection in the Song of Songs as the remains of a presumably extensive erotic poetry, arising among the Hebrews through the same natural circumstances which produce love lyrics and folk ballads among all peoples. The inclusion of such lyrics in a collection that acquired a sacred significance is, therefore, due to the fact upon which too much emphasis cannot be laid, that the growth of the canon of the Old Testament follows along the line of least resistance, by which is meant that whatever was preserved of the older folk literature was due to its popularity in the best sense of the word. Not that all which made a popular appeal was preserved. Far from it; but whatever we have in the Old Testament represents material that fitted in with the life of the people in earlier or in later days. The spirit to be found in the frequently revised and gradually evolved legal codes found a response in the religious earnestness of the post-exilic period, just as in the utterances of the prophets, the original impress made by striking exhortations or severe denunciations was reinforced because of the application to later days of the promises involved in these utterances by the side of warnings. The aspirations of the prophets formed the basis of the hopes of the pious religious communities living under discouraging conditions during the three centuries before our era. These com-

munities needed the consolation and encouragement which they found in the collections made of what had come down from the past. This need led to the steady enlargement of consolatory literature, in the style of the prophets, of which the present composite Book of Daniel—concerned largely, if not exclusively, with the struggle of the people against forcible attempts at Hellenization—is an outcome.[16]

Job and Koheleth (Ecclesiastes) were produced and preserved because they fitted in with other moods. The Book of Job was an outcome of the disposition in intellectual circles, inclined towards skepticism, to discuss the deeper problems involved in the endeavor to reconcile the conception of Divine government of the Universe, as taught by the prophets, through a Power making for goodness and for justice, with conditions as they actually are in this world, with its daily examples of the suffering of the innocent, while the wicked escape their merited punishment and "wax and grow fat." The searching question "Why?" could not be suppressed, and it became more searching as political and social conditions after the fifth century before this era grew worse instead of better, and the example of innocent suffering furnished by the folktale of Job seemed applicable to Israel as a people. Where was God while his chosen people steadily lost ground in their

[16] This view of the *Book of Daniel*, as a series of political pamphlets—as we would say—issued for the consolation and encouragement of the people during the Maccabean revolt against the tyranny of the Seleucid rulers, which reached its climax in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164 B. C.) is the one generally adopted by modern scholars. See Driver, *Daniel*, pp. x–lxxvii, for an admirable and popular exposition of this point of view.

hopes to re-establish their political independence and to usher in the hoped-for new era of social justice? Job made its popular appeal, as is shown by the various attempts made to counteract the effect of the skeptical trend of the book in its original form.[17] Koheleth in lighter vein deals with the topsy-turvy conditions that the author finds in the paradoxical world about him, where chance rather than design seems to rule and where one grows weary of everything, even of the choicest delights.

In a community in which all shades of opinion are represented, the cynic is also to be found by the side of the skeptic. Both gather their circle of admirers and followers; Koheleth is a cynic, though a gentle one, and the proof of the popularity enjoyed by his *causeries*—for such they are—in which with delicious humor and mild satire he expresses the foibles of the age, is shown by the attempts made to counteract his unorthodox sentiments by additions[18] emanating from other and more serious circles, who felt offended by his jibes and insinuations. We are, therefore, justified in assuming in the case of the Song of Songs that their response to the lighter moods which form an ingredient in the make-up of a people's life led to their preservation and hence to their inclusion in a collection which, it has now become clear, must be viewed primarily from the popular and not from the scholastic angle. The Old Testament is first of all a selection from the literature produced in the course of many centuries among the

[17] See the author's *Book of Job*, chapter II.
[18] See *A Gentle Cynic*, pp. 71–85.

ancient Hebrews and the later Jews. Its sacred character is an acquired rather than an original quality, an outcome of the predominance of the strongly religious character of the bulk of the books, so overwhelming in its sweep as to dwarf books like Koheleth, the Song of Songs and Ruth, which are essentially secular, and to relegate into insignificance the remains of tribal anecdotes, folk tales, bits of martial poetry and the like, inserted into the Pentateuch and the Historical Books, that are without any decided religious import. Once, however, the religious aspect of the collection of Hebrew literature as a whole becomes the outstanding feature, the necessity arises of justifying the inclusion of material that on its surface was either not religious at all, or if it touched on the domain of religious thought and practice was not in conformity with the dominant orthodoxy. This process is likewise a gradual one and we are not in a position to follow it in its details. Much remained in the Pentateuch and in the Historical Books that contradicted the later ethics. Despite the re-editing of old traditions and historical narratives so as to make them fit in with the *scheme* of Hebrew history as evolved by projecting later ideas into periods antecedent to the time when these ideas were first promulgated, the Deity is often represented as acting in a manner far too naïve for a Power conceived as a spiritual Being of universal scope—the symbol of an advanced conception of Unity in the Universe. In an age that was not troubled by a critical spirit, these inconsistencies did not seriously disturb people's minds. Such an

age could tolerate by the side of the first chapter of Genesis, resting on an impressive and singularly advanced view of a Creator producing the world by the power of his word and often approaching an abstract conception of the world as an emanation from a divine source, an older account of the creation in the second and third chapters in which the serpent conducts itself like a human being and the Deity is pictured as taking an evening promenade in the garden and entering into familiar discourse with the first human pair. The old is retained by the side of the new. Survivals of primitive rites are naïvely portrayed by the side of doctrines that denounce such rites as foolish or impious superstitions. So, to select a single example out of several dozen that might be chosen, the Pentateuch preserves the account of the making of a brazen serpent (Num. 21, 8-9) by Moses as a means of healing the people of serpent bites—a bit of sympathetic magic of a primitive character. This is done as the narrative tells us "at Yahweh's command;" and yet this same Yahweh expressly forbade the use in the cult of any image of anything in heaven or on earth or in the waters. According to a notice in the Book of Kings (II Kings 18, 4) the Hebrews continued offering incense to the brazen serpent till the days of Hezekiah (726-697 B. C.), who destroyed it along with the high places, the sacred stones and pillars and other symbols, all done away with by the reform of the cult which was brought about in his days. This example is characteristic of the manner in which an unhistorical tradition by projecting later conditions into a remote

past becomes involved in hopeless inconsistencies. The aim of the modern critical study of the Bible is to substitute for this unhistorical tradition an historical setting to the books of the Old Testament, to illuminate their contents by an interpretation that takes account of the gradual evolution of ideas and practices, in accord with the social, political and intellectual vicissitudes which a people experiences. The Old Testament viewed from the angle of tradition gives us a flat picture without any perspective; the historical method aims to remedy this defect. It forces us to abandon the view still widely current that the books of the Old Testament are all woven of a single pattern with merely variations in the color. The supposed unity in the Old Testament is the creation of "tradition." In reality, diversity is the distinguishing mark of the Old Testament—diversity in origin and character, diversity in the subjects treated, diversity above all in the points of view from which in the different books the same theme is regarded. The unity which we see in the collection—and which is purely on the surface—is a testimony to the complete sway which the unhistorical tradition that gathered in the course of time around the books of the Old Testament acquired—a sway so strong as to require the united efforts of several generations of critically minded scholars to break its spell.

IV

It was inevitable that such a collection as that represented in the Song of Songs should have come under the influence of the unhistorical tradition

which gave its color to all the books of the Old Testament collection. When the stamp of approval was given by the Rabbis of the first century of this era—whether in a series of formal assemblies or by a more indirect process—to the selection of Hebrew literature made by popular consensus, an endeavor to justify the approval by giving to the collection an authoritative character and one that would accord with the prevailing orthodoxy followed as a logical and inevitable corollary.

The Rabbis were hard put to it in the case of the Song of Songs. The character of the love lyrics was so unmistakably erotic that it was not possible to change it by any counteracting additions, as the attempt was made to conceal the gentle cynicism of Koheleth by superimposed pious reflections, or as the skeptical trend of the Book of Job was diverted by substantial additions to suggest more orthodox solutions for the perplexing problems of the existence of evil in a world created by a supposedly beneficent and just Power. Such a process could not be applied to the Song of Songs. No additions could hide their original character; no alterations change their passionate appeal. Some other means had to be found in order to adapt love lyrics to a sacred collection, to make compositions of folk origin, expressive of a natural phase of folk life, fit into the framework of a canon that viewed life exclusively from the religious point of view. A theory had to be evolved in regard to the Song of Songs that would successfully change the *entire* character of the songs. This was accomplished, as already suggested, by giving to erotic compositions

an allegorical interpretation, with Yahweh as the lover and Israel as the bride. The Christian Church seized upon this happy solution and by substituting Christ for Yahweh and the Church for Israel, adapted the Song of Songs to its needs.[19] Again, however, a word of warning is in place lest we obtain a distorted picture of the process involved by assuming that a body of Rabbis convened with the deliberate intent of changing a secular composition into a sacred one. As the popular attitude towards the ancient love lyrics which had grown from the life of the people lies at the basis of their preservation, so the later mood of the Jewish communities, rather than the didactic intent of any particular group, superinduced the disposition to give to the Song of Songs a religious import, just as we must also make allowance for this mood in leading to the endeavor to cover up the original aim of such books as Ecclesiastes and Job by superimposing layers in the interests of orthodoxy. Ecclesiastical authority is apt to follow popular drift rather than to be the leader in creating the drift. It avails itself of current tendencies in religious thought and practice and strives to reinforce them. The role of the Rabbis and of the theologians of the early Christian Church in their discussions of the Biblical Books was not that of making innovations, but that of strengthening and of giving definite direction to conservative currents which generally arise among the rank and file and not among the leaders. The further process of giving to certain books of a doubtful character the stamp of religious ortho-

[19] See further chapter III, dealing specifically with the allegorical interpretation.

doxy is likewise an outgrowth of popular opinion or at all events of a popular drift. We must seek for this drift in the theory which grew up around the Song of Songs and which led to obscuring entirely the original intent of the songs themselves. There are several factors involved in this theory and before the allegorical interpretation could obtain complete sway, the association of the magic name of King Solomon with the songs had to become so definitely established as to pave the way for a genuinely religious interpretation to distinctively secular productions. How did the name of Solomon come to be connected with a collection of love songs? To that question we must now turn.

CHAPTER II

THE SOLOMONIC TRADITION

I

SOLOMON AS THE "GREAT LOVER"

In the text of the Song of Songs as we now have it, the name of Solomon appears no less than seven times, but a critical study shows that of these occurrences only three belong to the original text.[20] One of these is a purely incidental reference to the "curtains of Solomon"(1, 5), to the dark color of which the sunburnt maiden compares herself, while the other two occur in the last song (8, 11 and 12, Song No. XXIII), in which the lover endeavors to bring out the contrast between his beloved, a simple rustic maiden who is *his* vineyard for himself alone, and a royal vineyard.[21] In all three instances Solomon is synonymous with "royal," for clearly a phrase like the "curtains of Solomon" is not to be taken literally but as a metaphor for a rich color—as we still associate dark purple with royalty. Similarly, in the vineyard song Solomon has already become a mere name for a royal owner of an estate, to emphasize the sharp contrast between simplicity and extreme grandeur. Solomon as the *grand monarque* of Israel becomes the symbol of royalty, and the use

[20] The remaining four represent later additions: (1) 1, 1 in the title. See note 1 to Song No. 1. (2) 3, 7 as an addition to a gloss. (3) 3, 9 and (4) 3, 11. The metrical construction in both these instances shows that Solomon was not in the original text. See the notes to the passages in Song No. IX.

[21] See further the notes to the two passages in Song No. XXIII.

of the name in this way points to the origin of the particular song at a time when Solomon had become a tradition of a period that took on a more glorious hue in proportion as it receded into the past. I am inclined to believe that this introduction of Solomon in one of the Songs which was attached to our collection formed the starting-point for the association of Solomon with the book—the seed-pod from which there grew up an elaborate and thoroughly uncritical tradition entwined around the entire collection.

An entering wedge for the association of the name of Solomon was all that was necessary to lead to the next step, which likewise identified "the king," mentioned a number of times in the songs, with Solomon. Though much that was told of Solomon in the semi-historical and semi-legendary documents, which were dovetailed into one another to form the books of Samuel and Kings,[22] is legendary, he still towers above other monarchs of the northern and southern kingdoms. His single rival in popular acclaim is David, and tradition was so shaped as to find a place for both without the one crowding out the other. By the side of Solomon and David, the other rulers step into the background, and even notable figures like Ahab of the northern Kingdom (875-853 B. C.) and Hezekiah of the southern Kingdom (726-697 B. C.) are placed in the shadow by the powerful light that is concentrated on the two outstanding personalities of

[22] The Greek version groups the two Books of Samuel and the two Books of Kings under the single designation of "Kings," divided into four divisions. On the composite character of these books see Creelman, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 55-73.

these two kings. When, therefore, in the first song, "the king" is besought by the maiden (1, 4),

> "Hasten to take me away;
> Bring me, O King, into thy chamber."

or when in the fourth song she describes the joy of her reunion with the king,

> "As long as the king was on his couch
> His nard sent forth its fragrance."

it was concluded that the king could be none other than Solomon; and it was merely a small step actually to insert the name Solomon in two instances after the word "king" in the ninth Song (3, 9 and 11) descriptive of the bridal procession.[23] With Solomon thus introduced at the beginning, in the middle and at the close of the book, the evidence seemed more than sufficient to bring the great king into closest association with the Song of Songs. Besides, was there not the confirmatory authority of tradition depicting Solomon as a great lover, just as his predecessor David was depicted as extremely sensible to feminine charms? The three episodes of Abigail, the wife of Nabal (I Sam., chap. 25), of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite (II Sam., chap. 11), and of Abishag, the Shunamite (I Kings, chap. 1), make strange reading in the account of David's career and are hard to reconcile with the picture of David as a pious "sweet singer of Israel" which tradition tries to impress upon us. There are clearly two Davids, the human and the idealized hero; and, similarly, by the side of Solomon the type of wisdom and of devo-

[23] The seventh occurrence of the name (3, 7) is a gloss added to a comment. See note 9 to Song No. IX.

tional piety whose chief ambition was the building of a magnificent sacred edifice in honor of Yahweh, there is the other Solomon who "loved many foreign women"(I Kings, 11, 1).

With striking impartiality he includes, besides an Egyptian princess, Moabitish, Ammonitish, Edomitish, Zidonian and Hittite women in his harem which, according to tradition, reached the astounding number of "seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines" to whom, as we are told, "he was attached in love" (I Kings 11, 2); and the Arabic legend about King Solomon adds the Queen of Sheba to the list of the royal favorites.[24] The pious editor who felt obliged to retain the references to the amatory tendencies of the great king in the documents before him was manifestly embarrassed. He eases his conscience by attributing Solomon's deviation from the straight paths of virtue and piety to the many wives which he had gathered. One may well believe this; and even if he had not so deviated before gathering an extensive harem, seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines would be capable of corrupting even a saint. Obliged by the unhistorical tradition to assume that the prohibition against intermarriage with foreigners dated from the days of Moses, the pious editor is hard put to it thus to hold Solomon up as a flagrant transgressor of a divine ordinance; and so he again excuses the king by intimating that his wives "turned his heart" (I Kings 11, 4). Since the heart was regarded as the seat of the intellect the

[24] See the story of Bilkis (the name given to the queen) in Weil's "*Biblical Legends of the Mohammedans.*"

phrase was equivalent to saying that they "turned his head," which we can well believe, but not perhaps in the way that the pious chronicler had in mind. At all events the picture of Solomon as the "great lover" was retained in the records, though one suspects that details were omitted in order to gloss over a side of the great king that did not fit into the framework of tradition which held him up as a model for all times.

II

These two aspects of Solomon—Solomon the lover and Solomon the wise—were seized upon at a period when the transition from anonymous and collective to individual authorship[25] led to the search for authors for books that had acquired sufficient standing and popularity to bring about their preservation and eventually to admit them to a choice collection of the literary products of the past. Solomon takes his place by the side of Moses as an author; and since his fame as shaped by the tradition rested so largely on the wisdom that he displayed, and which was granted to him as a gift from Yahweh himself, books like Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, in which views of life based upon profound insight into the struggles and activities of existence are set forth, were also ascribed to him.

In an idealized estimate of his grandeur, of the magnificence of his court, and of his wealth and power, this tradition about his authorship also finds a place.[26]

[25] See *A Gentle Cynic*, p. 51 *seq.*
[26] I Kings 5, 9-14.

"And God[27] gave wisdom to Solomon and very large understanding and breadth of mind[28] as the sands on the seashore. And the wisdom of Solomon excelled the wisdom of the sons of the East[29] and all the wisdom of Egypt. And he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol,[30] and his fame spread through the nations on all sides. And he spoke[31] three thousand proverbs, and his songs[32] were five and one thousand.[33] And he spoke of trees from the cedar in the Lebanon to the hyssop that springs out of the wall, and he spoke of the beasts and of winged creatures and of creeping things and of fish.[34] And there came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom."

Here you have tradition at its climax. National pride comes to reinforce the recollection of Solomon's brilliant reign until he becomes the wisest man of all ages and an author whose scope is as boundless as his wisdom. Idealization could go no further. Not content with tracing to him all the extant proverbs and songs—that seems to be what is meant by the introduction of such high figures—the animal fables which had come to the Hebrews from India were likewise ascribed to him. Whether the tradition about the "five and one thousand songs" already assumed a Solomonic authorship for our Song of Songs is a question that cannot be decided definitely, but the use of the same word

[27] The use of "Elohim" for God, instead of Yahweh points to the late date of the summary.

[28] Text "heart" in the sense of intellect as usual.

[29] The Babylonians are meant.

[30] Names that had become traditional for their wisdom, but of whom nothing is known to us.

[31] We would say "composed." The use of the word "speak" is interesting as pointing to "oral" rather than "written" production, which marked the earlier days of literary composition.

[32] The singular "song" is used as a collective term.

[33] A strange way of putting it. The Greek version says 5000.

[34] The reference is to fables in which animals are introduced as the speakers.

for "song" (*shir*) as in the title to our book speaks in favor of the supposition that it had become customary to attribute sayings and songs—both distinctly popular in origin—to the great Solomon, and that the notice therefore in the extravagant estimate of Solomon reflects already the Solomonic tradition regarding the "Song of Songs"—at least to the extent of associating with Solomon the authorship of songs, if not actually of our collection.

As has been pointed out elsewhere,[35] in the quest for authors of Biblical books—a quest which does not set in until after the contact of the Jews with Greek culture, *i.e.*, after the last quarter of the fourth century B. C.—books are assigned to certain individuals not upon authentic grounds but upon more or less uncritical analogies and often upon mere association of ideas between the contents of a book and the popular estimate of an individual. Because Moses came down in tradition as a lawgiver—which he must indeed have been—*all* laws are carried back to him, and the process leads to ascribing to him also the framework of narrative in which the various codes of the Hebrews are encased. So uncritical was the spirit in which this association of Moses with the entire Pentateuch took shape that the question was never raised, how it came about that throughout the Pentateuch Moses is always spoken of in the third person; whereas one would expect an author to use the first person. Nor were people seriously disturbed by the circumstance that at the close of the Pentateuch the supposed author describes his own death (Deut.

[35] *A Gentle Cynic*, p. 53 *seq.*

chapter 34), and himself records the estimate of posterity that "there arose no prophet in Israel like Moses whom Yahweh knew face to face." Because David appears to have been a poet as well as a romantic hero, and tradition changed him from a very wordly monarch into a pious one, the finest product of the religious literature of the ancient Hebrews and of the later Jews is attributed to him. It became natural to link David with the Psalms despite the fact that in the final form given to the five books into which the collection of 150 compositions was divided, many contain headings which ascribe them to others than to David. The uncritical tradition ignored the many references in the Psalms to events—like the destruction of the southern kingdom in Ps. 137—that took place many centuries after David, quite apart from the fact, obvious even to a superficial observer, that the religious sentiments in most of the Psalms reflect an age far more advanced in its religious thought and aspirations than the one in which David lived.

We must not press this "traditional" authorship of the books of the Old Testament too far. Probably those who set it up did not wish us to take it literally, but rather as an association between an individual and a certain book. Even at the time when the search for authors for the Biblical books began, the transition from collective and anonymous to individual authorship was not complete. Those who ascribed the Pentateuch to Moses and the Psalms to David did not yet have in mind our modern picture of an author as one who sets himself the task of writing

a book, and when finished of giving it to the world. The differentiation between an author and a scribe was not yet precise. An author was still primarily a writer—one who wrote something down—and therefore an editor or even a copyist was likewise an author.

We must try to place ourselves in an environment in which the association of an individual with a book *merges* into what we would call genuine authorship, in order to understand how the tradition arose which ascribed the collection in the Song of Songs to Solomon. The three factors above discussed,—the occurrence of the name of Solomon in some of the songs, the identification of the "king" mentioned in some of the songs with Solomon and the tradition of Solomon as a great lover,—would suffice to bring about precisely such an association of the *grand monarque* with the Song of Songs as to lead to the view expressed in the later heading of the book,

"The Song of Songs which is Solomon's."

The heading "to Solomon," to convey authorship, is in itself so vague that it could be used in Hebrew to express merely an association, as, *e.g.*, of songs dealing with Solomon, or of the days of Solomon, or in which Solomon was introduced, just as the heading to the 90th Psalm "A Prayer to Moses" might, according to Hebrew usage, mean a prayer of the days of Moses or a prayer put into the mouth of Moses quite as much as a prayer actually written by Moses. The vagueness of the preposition reflects the indefiniteness still connected with authorship. It

cannot be sufficiently emphasized that in approaching the books of the Old Testament—and this applies also to the New Testament, though not in the same degree,—we must not apply our modern and Western methods of literary composition. Books were written long before there were authors. Even when oral tradition yielded to written transmission of laws, prayers, exhortations, tales and narratives, the author in our sense of the word, as the individual who conveys his personality to us through some product of his pen and who stamps that personality upon his production, had not yet made his appearance. Association of an individual with a book proved the point of departure for a process which would end in identifying such association with authorship. The Talmudic passage [86] which attempts to assign authors to Biblical books illustrates this process. Because Joshua plays a prominent part in the Book of Joshua, he is said to be the author; and similarly Samuel is looked upon as the author of the two books bearing his name. The Rabbis were certainly aware that Joshua as little as Moses could have written the account of his death with which the book closes, and that the books of Samuel pass far beyond the age of the great seer and leader and indeed up to the closing days of King David, quite apart from the fact that Joshua and Samuel are spoken of in the third person throughout the books in question. It is difficult to assume that even in an uncritical age, the composite character of the narratives in such books as Joshua, Samuel and Kings should have entirely escaped the

[86] Talmud Babli, Baba Bathra, 15ª.

notice of those who read them carefully; but with the attention of the Rabbis concentrated on the factor of association of individuals with books, other factors that might have obtruded themselves were deliberately set aside. The association of Solomon with wisdom would suffice under these influences to bring about the tradition which ascribed the entire collection of Proverbs to him, although its composite character lies on the surface, and others than Solomon are expressly named as collectors of sayings.[37] The heading "Proverbs of Solomon" employed three times (Prov. 1, 1; 10, 1 and 25, 1), would merely have the force of "Solomonic Proverbs", *i.e.*, sayings in the style of Solomon. The heading would reflect the tradition connecting Solomon with wise maxims in general without further differentiation. Such a generalization is precisely what would happen in an uncritical age still having hazy ideas about authorship.

Applying this reasoning to the Song of Songs, there would not be much difference between references to Solomon in the collection and the actual ascribing of the songs to him, authorship being merely viewed as *one* aspect of association with a book out of several possible ones; the actual mention of Solomon in one song, the assumption of allusions to him in others, and the reputation of Solomon as being fond of women would all be placed on the same level and in combination lead to assigning all love songs that had been preserved, to Solomon.

[37] The "men of Hezekiah" (chap. 25, 1), Agur (chap. 30, 1) and Lemuel (chap. 31, 1).

The Solomonic tradition would thus account for the view which once promulgated would tend to become more definite with time, connecting Solomon with the actual authorship of a collection of love songs.

Such argumentation might appear to be quibbling, and so it is from our Western point of view, which will not tolerate any vagueness in the conception of authorship, but that is just the difference between the Western and the Eastern attitude towards this question. A book *about* an individual shades over into a book *by* an individual in an age which still has nebulous notions of what genuine authorship implies. The fact that the tradition of Solomonic authorship could arise is a testimony to this nebulousness. Had a clearer view prevailed, tradition would not have gone further than to connect Solomon with the love poems as their *subject*, as the one whose love affairs are set forth in the collection by an author or by authors who wished to depict him as the great lover. The alternative to the view here taken of the manner in which the tradition arose that made Solomon the actual author of love poems in which he is introduced in the third person or, as in one instance, in which he is actually addressed, would be to suspect the author of the tradition as attempting to foist a deception upon us and, moreover, a deception so patent as not to be able to accomplish its purpose. That is not, however, the way in which tradition arises. The process is a much more indirect one. A tradition that takes such a strong hold upon a people as to color the entire view of their past is not one that has been foisted

upon them but must have arisen from them; and since the popular spirit is not critical and is generally illogical, it is not difficult to account for such vagaries as ascribing love poems—themselves of popular origin—to some one whose name was introduced into some of them.

It is the same popular spirit, proceeding in the same uncritical and illogical manner and ignoring all genuine criteria for fixing the authorship of books, that led to assigning Proverbs and Koheleth to Solomon In Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the popular spirit saw the reflection of the "wise" Solomon; in the Song of Songs it was the image of Solomon "the great lover." As has been pointed out elsewhere,[38] one of the results of clinging to tradition is that it dulls the critical sense. Only in this way can we account for the fact that Jewish exegetes and Christian theologians continued to write bulky commentaries and endless homilies on the Song of Songs for centuries upon centuries, without recognizing the unsoundness of the Solomonic tradition, without even seeing that internal evidence made it impossible to assume that Solomon should have written these charming love poems. Occasionally a doubt is suggested in a mind that rises superior to the influence of its surroundings and challenges the tradition, but the voice is soon drowned in the chorus of protests that ensue and we must pass down close to our days to find the traditional view giving way to one based upon a critical study of the little collection.

[38] *Book of Job*, p. 120.

III

Having set forth how the Solomonic tradition, entwined around the Song of Songs, arose, it is hardly necessary to point out in detail the fatal objections to the tradition from the historical point of view. The assumption involved in the tradition that the songs represent a literary *unit* will not endure the test of criticism. They form a series of independent little songs that have been gathered together and there is internal evidence that the songs do not all belong to the same period. Some point to northern Palestine as their home, as for example, Nos. XI and XVII, others to the south.

What is more to the point, they have all the earmarks of folk songs. Their charm is due to their naïveté and simplicity. Only here and there do we see the hand of the self-conscious literary artist at work in shaping the folk songs by adding refrains and by transferring portions of one song to another and in superimposing glosses and comments and variants to the original text. In a subsequent chapter, the details of this editorial revision to which the songs were subjected will be set forth. The language of the songs likewise points to their origin at different times. The introduction of a Greek word in song No. IX,[39] brings the final redaction of this poem to the third century B. C.; the occurrence of a Persian word [40] in another, likewise forces us to pass down at least

[39] Appiryon–*phoreion* "litter" (3, 9). See note 12 to Song No. IX.

[40] Pardes–*paradeiza* "park or grove" in Song No. XIII (4, 13). See the note to the verse.

five centuries after Solomon for this particular song. The language of most of the songs favors a later rather than an earlier date. So, for example, the constant use of the certain relative particle [41] is a mark of late books like Koheleth. There are Aramaic words and Aramaic constructions which confirm the general impression of a late redaction for the songs, some of which, to be sure, may have circulated orally for a long time before they were given a written form. There is in short not a single argument in favor of a Solomonic authorship, even if we assume—for which there is no warrant—that this monarch was a writer.

But the rise of the Solomonic tradition, while it appeared to justify the inclusion of the Song of Songs in a sacred collection, also created further embarrassment to the orthodox who had recourse to this theory in order to allay their doubts about the character of the songs. Even the attachment of the magic name of Solomon to the songs could not do away with their erotic character, so patent that glosses and additions were of little avail in removing the frank allusions to passionate love, to sexual longings and to the fulfilment of these longings. Indeed, with Solomon as their author, the objectionable character of the songs, from the point of view of the prudish moralist and of the religious purist, was increased rather than diminished. What was one to think of an idealized monarch to find him apostrophizing a rustic maiden:

[41] *she* instead of *asher*.

"To a steed of Pharaoh's chariot,
I compare thee, my darling.
Thy cheeks are comely (as) with trappings;
Thy neck with strings of beads.
Golden circlets we will make for thee,
With studs of silver." (1, 9-11.)

or entering upon a passionate description of the maiden's charms,

"Thy eyes are doves
Behind thy veil.
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That trail from Gilead.

* * *

Thy neck like the tower of David,
Built for an armory.

* * *

Thy breasts are like two fawns,
Twins of a gazelle." (4, 1, 4, 5)

or introducing the still stronger erotic allusions in a companion song (7, 1-10—Song No. XVIII).

What an awful book to associate with Solomon! How undignified to represent the great king as thus pouring forth his wild passion, raving about the charms of a country lass, and in addition to have him picture her as consumed with passion for her lover, dreaming about him, ecstatic at the mere thought of his embraces and describing the charms of his person. Certainly a strange book to be handed down in the name of the most glorious of the Hebrew rulers, who was to be held up as the ideal king by the grace of Yahweh. For—be it remembered—the memory of Solomon the great lover was only grudgingly preserved by the sober-minded compilers of the Book of Kings, who tried, as we

have seen, to attribute to his susceptibility to feminine charms his fall from piety in his old age. And yet if the Song of Songs was to stand as it had been put together by some editor or by a series of editors as the work of Solomon, would it not blast the reputation of the traditional Solomon? What would become of the wise and pious Solomon if he were to go down to future ages as the author of a series of passionate love songs, without a trace of either piety or wisdom in them? To permit this would have involved the triumph of Solomon the "great lover" over Solomon "the wise king." The idealized Solomon would have been swept away by the torrential force of the love lyrics. The upholders of the pious Solomon tradition thus found themselves placed in a serious dilemma by the very effort to justify the inclusion of the Song of Songs in a sacred collection through the appeal to the magic name of Solomon. The book was saved, but at the expense of endangering Solomon's reputation. The great king could not be permitted to pass down the ages as a Jewish Don Juan pouring out his passion unblushingly at the feet of rustic maidens and enticing them by the lure of the royal harem. The circumstance that the uncritical tradition did not differentiate between Solomon portrayed as a great lover in the lyrics and Solomon as the author of these lyrical sighs and longings, only made the situation more difficult for those who were bound at all hazards to preserve the idealized picture —the pious temple builder and the model for all times of human wisdom in its most attractive form.

There seemed only one way out of the dilemma, to discard the literal meaning of the lyrics for an allegorical interpretation, and to seek for a hidden meaning beneath the obvious one. The artificiality of this method was no bar to its general acceptance by Synagogue and Church alike, and to its retaining its hold close to the threshold of modern times. How was this allegorical interpretation brought about?

CHAPTER III

THE ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SONG OF SONGS

I

The temptation to apply the love songs in our book to the relationship between Yahweh and Israel lay close at hand. The pre-exilic prophets did not hesitate to introduce the relationship between man and wife as a metaphor to illustrate Yahweh's love for his people. Jeremiah and Hosea more particularly are fond of this picture and stress it in the admonitions handed down in their names. Yahweh is represented as picking out Israel as a man chooses his bride. The traditional association between Yahweh and Israel at Mt. Sinai that marks the beginnings of their relations is likened to the marriage vow between husband and wife. The early days of the national life, marked by the wanderings of the people in the wilderness are portrayed as the honeymoon season with the trusting bride ready to follow her bridegroom whithersoever he leads her.[42] The falling away from Yahweh when, with the advance to agricultural life in Palestine, the Hebrews adopted the agricultural festivals of the Canaanites and many of their rites is portrayed as faithlessness on the part of the wife. Isaiah, Amos, Micah, Jeremiah, as well as Hosea picture Israel's backslidings as harlotry.

[42] Jer. 2, 1-2.

Referring to the cult on the high places and in sacred groves, Jeremiah exclaims

"Upon every high hill
And under every leafy tree,
Thou didst recline, playing the harlot.
(Jer. 2, 20.)

Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers."
(Jer. 3, 1.)

Israel is made to confess:

"I loved strangers and after them will I go."
(Jer. 2, 25.)

Yahweh in his anger is ready to cast the faithless wife aside:

"I will not have compassion upon her children;
For they are children of harlotry.
For their mother has played the harlot,
She that has conceived them has done shamefully
For she said: I will go after my lovers."
(Hosea 2, 6-7.)

But Yahweh's old love for Israel awakens, and he resolves to win her back to himself:

"I will allure her,
And bring her into the wilderness;
And speak tenderly unto her."
(Hosea 2, 16.)

Reassured of Israel's love and with confidence in her faithfulness, Yahweh pledges his troth anew:

"I will betroth thee unto me forever." (Hosea 2, 21)

Besides passages like these in the prophets, the emphasis placed upon God's love for his people compared to that of a father for his child further seemed to suggest that the human relationship in the

Song of Songs might be applied in a higher sense. There was also at least one erotic image occurring in several of the songs—that of the vineyard as the symbol of the beloved—which was likewise employed by one of the prophets and applied to Israel. Isaiah introduces a very impressive oration (chap. 5) by the parable of the husbandman who lovingly cares for his vineyard planted on fertile soil. He cleanses the soil of stones and weeds, he nurses the tender shoots only to find that despite his efforts the vineyard yielded wild grapes instead of choice fruit. The vineyard, the prophet goes on to explain, is the house of Israel and the husbandman Yahweh,

"Who looked for justice, but behold, oppression;
For righteousness, but behold, outcry."

What more natural, therefore, than to apply the imagery in the songs of the little lyrical collection to Yahweh and Israel, to interpret the passionate outbursts as expressions of God's love for his chosen bride, and to explain the bride's longings to be united with the beloved of her soul, and her joy upon finding him, to Israel's passionate attachment to the one who singled her out as his darling and who showered upon her gifts and ornaments, who watched over her and guided her in all her ways, even as a devoted lover acts toward the maiden of his choice.

We are not in a position to fix the date when this allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs first began to sway men's minds. In a general way we may connect its rise with the tendency that became marked in the writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 B. C. to 50 A. D.) to assume by

the side of the literal interpretation of Biblical narratives a symbolical one illustrative of religious ideas, of doctrines and even of philosophical speculations. Philo applies the allegorical interpretation more particularly to the creation and flood stories, to the stories of the patriarchs, to miracles, to the Egyptian plagues, to Moses, and to the Laws handed down in his name.[43] There are good reasons for believing that the stimulus to this allegorical method was given to the Jews through their contact with Greek culture;[44] for we find a tendency among Greek philosophers of the Stoical schools in the century before this era to explain the stories in Homer and the Greek myths in allegorical fashion. Philo, as we know, was steeped in Greek culture and indeed his conception of Judaism was largely an attempt to interpret the religion of his fathers in terms of the school of Greek philosophy to which he belonged—an eclectic system in which Platonic ideas and Stoic points of view are blended.

The allegorical method furnished both the Greeks and the Jews a convenient escape from accepting improbable tales literally and from endowing them with a meaning in keeping with more advanced thought. In the laws that Philo lays down for the application of his allegorical method, the fundamental principle is that anything in the Bible which seems objectionable, unbelievable, trivial, or contradictory to some other passage, must have a deeper meaning. The

[43] James Drummond, *Philo Judaeus*, vol. I, p. 18 *seq.*

[44] Leopold Cohn, *Die Werke Philos von Alexandrien*, in Deutscher Uebersetzung, I, p. 9.

Stoics applied exactly the same principle in giving to Homeric passages an allegorical interpretation. [45]

According to Philo, it is not to be supposed that God actually created the world in six days. There could be, he said, no calculation of time before the creation of the moon. The number six as being the most perfect number merely indicates the orderly manner of divine creation. When it is said that God planted trees in Paradise, the Paradise of virtues implanted in the human soul is meant. The two cherubim at the entrance of Paradise are not real beings, but symbolize goodness and authority, while the flaming sword is the Logos, *i.e.*, reason. These three factors in combination represent God's manner of government of the Universe. The deep sleep into which Adam falls symbolizes the rest given to human intelligence. When Abraham is promised an heir from his own loins, the soul freed from the shackles of the body and thus able to penetrate divine truth is symbolized. Abraham's intention to sacrifice Isaac with fire and knife is not to be taken as a literal tale, but represents the desire of man to burn his mortal part in order that with naked soul he may soar aloft to God. In this manner Philo passes through the entire Pentateuch and substitutes wherever the opportunity presents itself the symbolical interpretation for the literal one.

From a different point of view and without the intent of giving the allegorical interpretation of Biblical narratives and Biblical miracles a philo-

[45] See Carl Siegfried, *Philo in Alexandrien als Ausleger des Alten Testaments*, Jena, 1875, p. 165 *seq.*

sophical aspect, this method was also utilized by the representatives of orthodoxy in Palestine. Side by side with the serious interpretation of the laws that developed in the Talmudical schools there arose a disposition towards a fanciful embellishment of the patriarchs and of Moses and of such books as Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. In this homiletical expansion allegorical interpretation played a large part. The allegorical method of Biblical interpretation was also a factor, in both the Jewish and the Christian Churches, in leading to the sermon, which to this day still rests on the use of a text chosen from the Old or New Testament and unfolded not infrequently in allegorical fashion.

Philo himself never quotes the Song of Songs, so that we cannot trace its allegorical interpretation to him. Since his source for the Hebrew Scriptures is the Greek translation—and not the original text— it may be that the Song of Songs had not yet been translated in his days. At all events in the Greek translation that we have of the Song of Songs there are no traces as yet of allegorical endeavors. On the other hand, the extravagant praise bestowed on the Song of Songs by a famous Rabbi of the first century of our era, Akiba, [46] suggests that he must have had an allegorical interpretation in mind. If he had regarded the collection as consisting of secular love lyrics, he would hardly have said that while all the books of the Old Testament were holy, "the Song of Songs was most holy and that no day outweighed in

[46] Yadayim III, 5.

glory the one on which Israel received the Song of Songs." Such an enthusiastic estimate reveals its purpose to silence any doubts that may have been voiced as to the sacrosanct character of the book. There are indeed indications that before the meeting of the assembly in Jamnia, c. 90 B. C., which placed the final stamp of approval on the books that were to form part of an undisputed canon, the Song of Songs, as also Koheleth, formed subjects of discussion. For Koheleth the evidence is direct that the stricter party objected to the skeptical trend of the book as indicated in certain passages, and that in reply and by way of defense the more liberal wing of Jewish Rabbinism pointed to passages which counteracted the trend, though without recognizing that these passages represented later additions made for the express purpose of providing an antidote to the cynical sentiments of the *real* Koheleth.[47] For the Song of Songs we have in addition to a warning against regarding the songs as secular—they were not to be sung in a tavern—merely the statement that it was admitted into the canon, being classed with books that require "washing of the hands after handling them"[48]—a strange precaution introduced in order to separate sacred from profane books. The circumstance that the assurance had to be *specifically* given that the Song of Songs was on a par with other books of the sacred collection all of which rendered "the hands

[47] See further on this, *A Gentle Cynic*, pp. 71 *seq.* and 98 *seq.*

[48] The phrase runs "the *Song of Songs* renders one's hands unclean." (Mishah Yadayim 14, 6) to indicate that one must wash one's hands before turning to secular pursuits after handling something which was sacred to the touch. The phrase was synonymous with the recognition of the canonical character of a book.

unclean" points to a doubt which must still have been current. Such doubts could hardly have been set aside by arguments, but only by an interpretation other than a literal one and which R. Akiba must have had in mind when he declared the Song of Songs to be the holiest of all books. We have also the express statement [49] that the Song of Songs and Koheleth were not given complete recognition until they had been "interpreted" by those in authority; and there is concurrent testimony through a number of other passages in the Talmud that by the second century of our era, the allegorical interpretation of the songs had become current. So, for example, in connection with the passage at the close of the eleventh song reading:

> "Go forth and see the king,
> On the days of his nuptials.
> With the crown with which his mother crowned him,
> On the day of the joy of his heart." (3, 11.)

"the day of his nuptials," is explained as the day of the giving of the law, which marks, as it were, the betrothal of Yahweh to Israel, while "the day of the joy of his heart" refers to the erection of the temple in Solomon's days when the beloved sings of her lover:

> "Thy love is better than wine." (1, 2.)

the reference—it is explained—is to the sayings of the wise men of Israel which surpass even the wine which is the divine Law. [50]

[49] In a composite ethical treatise, dating from about the 8th century A. D. (though portions of it are considerably earlier), and known as the Aboth of Rabbi Nathan.

[50] Abodah Zarah, 35ª.

An apocryphal treatise of the end of the first century A. D.—the so-called Fourth Book of Esdras—furnishes the evidence that at that period the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs was taken for granted. Israel is called (5, 24) "the lily among the flowers" with an allusion to 2, 1 of the Song of Songs or the "dove" (5, 26) as the beloved is addressed throughout the Song of Songs. Again the "bride" (7, 26), likewise a common designation in the collection, is applied to the chosen people.

II

In order to obtain a complete idea of the extravagant manner in which this allegorical interpretation was carried out in the Jewish Church, we must turn to the Aramaic version of the Song of Songs—known as the Targum[51]—which, to be sure, in its present form is not earlier than the sixth century of our era, but probably reverts to a much earlier prototype. Here every verse of the eight chapters is accompanied by an extensive elaboration to explain the allegorical allusions, with the result that the original sense is buried under an avalanche of extravagant fancy. Let me give a few illustrations. The hemistich

"I am swarthy but comely." (1. 5.)

in the second song (according to the enumeration adopted in this volume), is explained as referring to

[51] Targum—the same as our word Dragoman (Turgeman, an interpreter) means "translation" or "interpretation." An English translation of the entire Targum of the *Song of Songs* is included in Gollancz's *Translations from Hebrew and Aramaic* (London, 1908) pp. 15-90.

Israel's fashioning of the golden calf. Sin turned the faces of the people black, but when they repented, their countenances radiated like those of angels:

"Look not upon me because I am swarthy,
Because the sun has burned me," (1, 6.)

is Israel's appeal to the nations not to despise her because she allowed herself to be misled by false prophets to worship the sun.

"My own vineyard I did not keep," (1, 6.)

is the confession of the people that it did not always obey the law of Yahweh. The comparison of the beloved

"To a steed of Pharaoh's chariot," (1, 9.)

suggests an allusion to the crossing of the Red Sea, which is described at length as an illustration of Yahweh's concern for his bride. The circlets of gold studded with silver (1, 11) are the two tables of stone given to Moses which were hewn out of the sapphire of the Divine throne bright as gold, while "silver" refers to the "Ten Words" written upon the stone by the finger of God and "purer than silver refined seven times seven."

The entire history of the people—in its traditional form—is passed in review before us as we proceed from verse to verse. Its glories and its discomfitures, its varying fortunes are all illustrative of the selection of Israel as the bride by Yahweh as her lover.

"I am the saffron of the plain;
The lily of the valleys," (2, 1.)

is Israel when the Shekinah—the "Divine Presence"—dwells in her midst.

"As a lily among thistles,
So is my darling among the daughters," (2, 2)

is the picture of Israel in exile—as a punishment for swerving from the right path. When the beloved in her dream (3, 3) encounters "the watchmen who go about the city," the allusion is to Moses and Aaron as the guardians of God's word and to whom sinning Israel appeals to help her again to find favor with Yahweh. The refrain "not to stir up nor arouse love till it be satiated"(3, 5) is Moses' charge to his people not to attempt to enter the promised land until the forty years of wandering decreed by Yahweh shall have passed.

It is particularly in the description of the bridal procession (3, 11) and in the praise of the beauty of the beloved (4, 1-7) and of the lover (5, 10-16) that the Rabbinic fancy is given the fullest freedom to disport itself. The procession winding its way through the wilderness [52] is the march of the Hebrews across the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua. "The litter of Solomon" is the temple, the armed escort

"Trained in war,
Each with his sword on his thigh," (3, 8)

are the Priests and Levites armed with the sword of the Law. The "conveyance" made by the king, in which the bride is carried, is the temple built by Solomon; "the pillars of silver," the Ark of the Testimony; "the supports of gold" are the two tablets of stone, while "the seat of purple" represents the curtains of blue and purple before the Ark.

[52] Better, however, "meadows." See note 3 to Song No. IX.

In the description of the beloved, the "eyes like doves" are the wise men in the Sanhedrin; "the teeth like a flock of sheep" is a reference to the sacrifices without blemish, eaten by Priests and Levites. The lips "like a thread of scarlet" are the utterances of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, who is turning the "scarlet" sins of the people to pure white, with an allusion to Isaiah 1, 18. The "neck like a tower of David" is the chief of the Academy; the "breasts like two fawns" refer either to two Messiahs who will be sent to deliver Israel, or to the two brothers Moses and Aaron. Correspondingly, the praise of the beauty of the lover (5, 10-16) is Israel's glorification of her lover Yahweh. The anthropomorphism is skillfully evaded by applying

"His head is fine gold
His locks are as branches."

to the Law, more desirable than purest gold. The eyes "like doves" are the thoughts of God directed towards Jerusalem.

"His lips like lilies,
Dripping with myrrh,"

are the scholars engaged in the study of God's Law, and the "comely mouth" is the revelation of the Law.

Imagine an entire book interpreted in such fashion, in order to save Solomon from the imputation of having written frivolous and undisguised love poems. His reputation was saved, but at the expense of an understanding of the book itself, which thus became a jumble of historical allusions, passing indiscriminately from one period to another, ranging

from the creation of the world to the Babylonian exile and centuries beyond, with the intense love for the *Torah*, the "Laws" *par excellence*, as the one redeeming feature of an entirely fanciful and purely arbitrary exegesis. It is strange, indeed, that such a method of interpretation should have made its appeal even to an age so uncritical as not to be able to differentiate between references to Solomon in the songs, and genuine authorship. And yet this method was taken over by the Christian Church. It found an exponent in the famous Church Father Origen (185-254 A. D.) whose example was implicitly followed by Christian theologians, including Jerome, Hippolytus (331-420 A. D.), the great Augustine (354-430 A. D.), the Venerable Bede (673-775 A. D.), through the scholasticism of the Middle Ages and the Protestant Reformation until with the appearance of Bishop Lowth's famous "Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews" in 1753 in England, and Herder's "Salomons Lieder der Liebe" in 1778 in Germany, the definite reaction in favor of a sober and literal interpretation of the book set in.

III

It is not necessary for our purposes to enter into a detailed exposition of the almost endless ramifications into which the allegorical interpretation branched out as it passed from century to century, and from land to land,[58] reflecting in each age and in

[58] August Eduard Cunitz devoted his thesis for his degree of Baccalaureate in Theology to the *Histoire Critique de l'Interpretation du Cantique des Cantiques* (Strasbourg, 1834) to a detailed account of the fascinating theme, which was

each country the prevailing tendencies of thought and the particular religious interests that absorbed men's minds. The weakness of the allegorical method from the modern point of view—its strength from the ancient viewpoint—reveals itself in these innumerable variations, but for that very reason it is important to call attention to at least some of the strange aberrations of the human mind manifested in these attempts to interpret a Biblical book, the obvious meaning of which lies on the surface. Modern critics are so frequently subjected to abuse on the part of those who are either unable or unwilling to interpret the books of the Old and New Testaments in their historical setting—and that is all that the so-called "Higher Criticism" attempts—that it is well to recall the vagaries into which the upholders of orthodoxy were led in their efforts to prevent the traditional Solomon from being engulfed by Solomon the "great lover."

The significant point of departure from the Jewish point of view in the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs as given by the Church Fathers and their successors, and which is followed by most Christian theologians down to the days of Lowth and Herder, is of course the change from the application of the Lover and Beloved to God and Israel in the Jewish exegesis, to Christ and the Church. Taking Origen as one of the earliest representatives of this transfer from a Jewish to a Christian interpretation of

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further amplified by C. D. Ginsburg in his *Introduction* (pp. 1-125) to his translation and commentary on *The Song of Songs* (London, 1857) to which works the reader interested in further details is referred.

the Song of Songs, it is instructive to see how he gives the cue to his many successors. Of the very voluminous commentary which he wrote on the Song of Songs only fragments have come down to us; but these are sufficient to show his general aim, as well as his dependence upon the allegorical method perfected in the schools of the Rabbis. His estimate of the Song of Songs as the "holy of holies" reminds one of Akiba's dictum above set forth. The Song of Songs, he says, is like the Sabbath of Sabbaths, the holiest of holy songs. The two chief personages in the songs are the bridegroom and the bride. The former is Christ, the latter the Church, and the songs depict the intimate relationship of the two. Both the bridegroom and the bride have their attendants in the songs, the bridegroom in the escort of his friends accompanying the bride in the procession (chap. 3,), and the bride in the maidens to whom she addresses herself in various parts of the songs (1, 5; 2, 7; 3, 5; 5, 8 and 16; 8, 4) or who address her (5, 9; 6, 1 and 13). The attendants of the bridegroom become in Origen's system the angels and saints in Heaven, while the companions of the bride are the believers on earth. The Jewish Targum applies the kisses of the lover for which the beloved longs (1, 2) to the Law given by Moses. Origen explains the suppliant voice of the bride for the "kisses of his mouth" as the longing of the Church to touch the lips of Christ himself. The Father in Heaven hears the cry and sends his Son into the world. The sweetness of the fragrance that emanates from the bridegroom (1, 3) becomes in the Targum the spread of the report of the miracles

wrought by God for his people; for Origen the fragrance is the emanation that comes from Christ, anointed by the Father. Origen follows the Targum closely in applying the hemistich,

"Swarthy am I and comely."

to the blackness that comes through sin and to the beauty that ensues when one is purged from sin. Just as the Targum introduces allusions to events in the traditional history of the Hebrews, so Origen's commentary is filled with references to events in the life of Christ, as shaped by Christian tradition. The Song of Songs becomes in its entirety an epithalamium or wedding song, celebrating the union of Christ with the Church.

In this same spirit the Church fathers devoted themselves to writing elaborate commentaries on the Song of Songs. They saw in every line allusions to Christ, to the Virgin Mary, to the Holy Ghost, or to the Apostles, or to the early experiences of the Christian communities. With the growing emphasis on Mary worship in the Catholic Church, the tendency arose to identify the bride in the Song of Songs with the Holy Virgin, rather than with the Church. The variations in the allegorical interpretations were indeed endless, but they all moved in one and the same direction. So for Cyril of Alexandria (390-444 A. D.) the conveyance in which the bride is carried (chap. 3, 6-11) became the Cross, "the pillars of silver" the thirty pieces of silver which brought Christ to the Cross. The "seat of purple" is the purple garment in which Christ was mocked, and

the "marriage crown" is the crown of thorns pressed on Christ's head. Each commentator strives to outdo his predecessor in new applications, but all of them produced merely variations on one and the same theme.

This allegorical interpretation became the only one recognized as legitimate. Only occasionally do we hear of protests against the exercise of this extravagant fancy; and the voice of the one who dared to raise a doubt whether the Song of Songs was really an allegory was soon silenced. Theodore, the Bishop of Mopsuestia (360-429 A. D.), stands out against the background of his age as a theologian of rational and remarkably advanced views. It was he who recognized that Biblical books had been interfered with by later editors, and who dared to question the tradition which ascribed the Psalms to David. Theodore stood out strenuously for a literal interpretation of the Song of Songs, with the result, however, that his commentary was condemned as heretical by the Second Council of Constantinople (553 A. D.) and is known to us only from accounts of it given by the enemies of this remarkable man.

As against this lonely heretic, however, stands his great contemporary Augustine (354-420 A. D.) who carries the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs even further than his predecessors by reading into the songs the criterion for settling controversies within the Church. He takes the question of the beloved to her lover

> "Tell me, beloved of my soul,
> Where thou feedest the flock." (I, 7.)

as the appeal of the Church to Christ to declare which is the true Church at which the flock—the faithful followers—may feed; and because the song continues, "where thou reclinest at noon," he sees herein Christ's answer that the true church is the one which lies in the meridian—therefore in Africa. For all that, the sober exegesis of Bishop Theodore must have left an impression, for we find other bishops in their sermons obliged to refute heretical views such as that Solomon composed these songs to celebrate his own wedding with Pharaoh's daughter—a view which Origen, to be sure, also admits may have been the historical basis of the songs, but which, he adds, must be set aside because of the fundamental principle governing the interpretation of the Bible as a whole, that anything in any Biblical book which is unworthy of the Holy Spirit as the source of the Bible *must* have a hidden meaning. Thus the little book continued to suffer at the hands of those who might be called its tormentors, who supplemented their bulky commentaries by innumerable sermons on it, until St. Bernard of Burgundy (1091-1153) surpassed all others by writing 86 homilies on the first two chapters, and then died. His zealous spirit was passed on to his disciple Gilbert Porretanus but he only survived to the elucidation of the first nine verses of the 5th chapter, by which time the total number of sermons had grown to 134. Every verse was torn from its context, aye every word was twisted out of its obvious meaning and drawn into the service of an allegorizing exegesis which, as it progressed, moved in the direction of mysticism.

IV

This mystical interpretation, curiously enough, was favored by some of the leading Jewish exegetes in the middle ages who evidently felt the weakness in the allegorical theory which opened the sluices to the inrush of individual fancy, and could be used by the Church with the same force to uphold its doctrines as by the Synagogue in opposing the Church. The allegorical interpretation was necessarily bound up with historical or quasi-historical events hidden under erotic imagery. Whether one accepted the Jewish interpretation or the Christian interpretation, both agreed in seeking for historical references throughout the songs. The tendency among the Jewish theologians was to pass from the comparatively simple allegory represented by the Targum to the Song of Songs, in which only a few events are mentioned, to a steadily increasing complexity which reaches its climax with a famous Jewish scholar Saadia (892-942 A. D.), who, declaring that Solomon foresaw the course of future events, finds in the Song of Songs a complete history of the Jews from the Exodus from Egypt to the coming of the Messiah in the 12th century. Ibn Ezra adopts the same theory. Similarly, among Christian theologians there arose the tendency to extend the historical allusions from incidents in the life of Christ to the history of the Church. Passing beyond the supposed references to the Apostles, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, Simon the Leper and others who figure in the Gospel narratives, the Church Fathers saw the early struggles and triumphs

of the Church depicted in the songs. Nicolaus de Lyra (1220-1340) in his commentary carries these historical allusions to the times of Constantine,[1] but there was no special reason for stopping at that point. Others went further until the climax of this method of seeing in the Songs the prophecy of the future was reached in Thomas Brightman who in his commentary published in 1600 brings the "prophetical" allusions down to his own days. The eight chapters thus become for him an historical epitome, beginning with David and extending to Luther and Melanchthon, to both of whom Brightman finds references in the closing chapter.

Saadia, whom we mentioned above, is forced to admit that the Song of Songs is "like a lock, the key of which has been lost."[54] He mentions some of the keys made to force the lock, and from his days up to the time of the Protestant Reformation the number of such keys had increased with every generation. In order to escape from the maze of supposedly historical allusions hidden beneath the imagery in the Song of Songs, and in regard to which no agreement could be reached since every one was free to follow his fancy, refuge was had to a mystic interpretation. The Song of Songs was an allegory, but the allusions in the songs were not to historical events—neither to Israel nor to the Church—but to doctrines. Ibn Ezra (1090-1167) refers to the philosophers who explain the Song of Songs as teaching "the mysterious harmony of the Universe

[54] At the beginning of his commentary to the *Song of Songs*.

and the union of the Divine soul with the earthly body." A century later we find Joseph Ibn Caspe,[55] reflecting the prevailing Aristotelianism as modified by Mohammedan and scholastic theology, declaring that the Song of Songs "represents the union between the Active Intellect and the Receptive Material Intellect." The former is the lover, the latter the beloved. Ibn Caspe bases this view upon the opinion set forth by the celebrated Jewish philosopher Maimonides in his "Guide to the Perplexed."[56] This mystic interpretation in the garb of philosophical terminology found great favor also among Christian scholars down to the middle of the 18th century. It was taken up as a result of the general drift towards mysticism in the twelfth century by theologians like Thomas de Verceil who interprets the longing of the bride at the beginning of the first song (1, 2) for the kisses of her lover as the desire of the pure soul to be absorbed into the bosom of Divinity.[57] He is followed by Richard of St. Victor for whom the theme in the Song of Songs is spiritual love seeking for God. Thomas Aquinas, combining mysticism and scholastic philosophy in his commentary, reaches a similar conclusion, and the climax is reached in Bonaventura, the "seraphic doctor," whose transcendentalism surpasses that of his predecessors. The transition from historical to mystical allegory thus brought with it new vagaries, interesting and im-

[55] Quoted at length by Ginsburg, *Song of Songs*, pp. 47-49.
[56] The reference is to Part III, chap. 57.
[57] Quoted by Cunitz, *Histoire Critique de l'Interpretation du Cantique des Cantiques*, p. 21.

portant only as reflecting tendencies prevailing in the days of those who sought in the Song of Songs the confirmation for these tendencies.

V

One might have supposed that a clear mind like that of Luther, whose views on the origin and nature of the books of the Bible marked a large step in advance over those of his predecessors, would have broken completely with any allegorical interpretation of a Biblical work. He saw indeed the subtle absurdities to which the attempts to see in the songs a hidden meaning had led scholars, but despite the independent character of his mental equipment, he was unable to face the possibility of attributing to Solomon the authorship of passionate love poems. Clinging as he did to this tradition, he substituted [58] for the theory which saw in the Song of Songs the conjugal union between Christ and the Church a view which made the beloved whom Solomon woos and to whom he pays the homage of his love, the symbol of the State which under Solomon's wise rule enjoyed such a large measure of peace and happiness. The Song of Songs is a mighty paean in which Solomon thanks God for the guidance granted to him. Obedience to God, as exemplified by Solomon in his career, leads to happiness of which the songs addressed to the State are an expression. For all that, the important step had been taken by Luther of breaking at least with the conventional form of allegorical interpretation which saw in the lover

[58] In his *Commentarum in Canticum Canticorum* (1538).

Christ, and in the beloved the Church or the Virgin Mary. The compromise proposed by Luther was rejected by a contemporary, Castellio, who in 1544 boldly declared that the Song of Songs was a colloquy of Solomon with a maiden Sulamith—mentioned twice at the beginning of chapter 7—of whom he was enamored. Nor did he hesitate to draw the inference—as did the unhappy Bishop Theodore of Mopsuestia twelve centuries earlier—that the book was unworthy of a place in a sacred canon. This—it will be recalled—was the alternative which those who accepted Solomon as the author of the Song of Songs were forced to face—either an allegorical interpretation in some form or the admission that a purely secular book had no place in a canon of sacred writings.

The literal interpretation thus once more brought forward had never indeed entirely died out, though the voices raised in its favor were few and far between. Ibn Ezra in the twelfth century refers to those who explain the songs literally, but—being himself suspected of heretical views—adds with evident anxiety to avoid the impression of favoring it: "Far be it! Far be it! to think that the Song of Songs is an amatory composition." A little later another Jewish scholar Joseph Kamchi refers to an exegete who took the Song of Songs literally as an erotic poem but who added apologetically that it was an effusion of Solomon's youthful spirit. [59] Such voices were drowned,

[59] Quoted by Ginsburg, *ib.*, p. 46. This view is based on a passage in the Midrash (homiletical expansion) to the *Song of Songs* (known as the Midrash Hazith) I, 10, in which it is stated that Solomon wrote the *Song of Songs* in his youth, *Proverbs* in his manhood, and *Koheleth* in his old age.

however, in the torrent of historical allusions, philosophical speculations and mystic doctrines that poured through the sluices of Biblical exegesis down to the eighteenth century when a definite reaction sets in, though we must pass down to the close of the century before we reach the end of the allegorical interpretation that held sway for so many centuries.

The reaction is foreshadowed by the famous French theologian and preacher Bossuet who in 1693 in his preface to the Song of Songs, takes up the view of Origen that the book was composed by Solomon in celebration of his marriage with a daughter of Pharaoh. He actually divides the book into seven songs to correspond to the duration of the wedding festivities. Hugo Grotius somewhat earlier, in his annotations to the Old Testament had set forth the same view, though he still clung to the belief that beneath the literal sense there was a hidden meaning which Grotius formulated "as the love of God for Israel and the love of Christ for the Church"—thus combining the Jewish and Christian interpretations. William Whiston, however, brushes aside all such compromises and in an essay on The Song of Songs published in 1723 [60] comes out boldly for the literal interpretation, and—like Castellio two centuries earlier—advocates its rejection from the sacred canon because of its lasciviousness and immoral sentiments. Whiston does not question that it was written by Solomon, but at a time when he was "wicked and

[60] A supplement to Whiston's *Essay Towards Restoring The True Text of The Old Testament* (London, 1723).

foolish." That was bold language and the challenge was taken up among others by a certain Dr. Gill who, we are told, preached 122 sermons to his congregation on the Song of Songs in order to refute Whiston and others who had come forward with novel views! It has already been suggested [61] that an interpretation of the Song of Songs as love poems does not lead to the condemnation so violently voiced by Whiston, but for all that it was well that the issue between the literal and allegorical interpretations was to be clearly faced. The knell of the allegorical theory had been sounded. Thirty years after Whiston, appeared Bishop Lowth's "Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews," which, by their acute penetration into the literary spirit of Old Testament productions, paved the way for an entirely new approach to the study of the Song of Songs, as for the other poetical books like Psalms and Job, and which was extended also to Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and to large sections of the Prophetical Books. What Lowth did for English readers, though the influence of his great work was not limited to English-speaking countries, Johann Gottfried von Herder did in Germany through his remarkable "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry"—which might be called a companion volume to Lowth's Lectures and like it was marked by its poetic quality and its literary insight. The point of departure in both Lowth's and Herder's contributions is the insistence upon the literal interpretation, though Lowth still clings to the *possibility*—though only a possibility—that the poems might also typify that other

[61] See chapter I.

Prince of Peace [62] who was to espouse a Church chosen from among the Gentiles. Lowth warns "against carrying the figurative explanation too far" and his entire exposition of the Song of Songs leads logically to the rejection of the allegorical theory, as was now clearly recognized by Bishop Percy in his new version of the Song of Songs, which he published with a brief commentary in 1764. Herder definitely throws aside all tendencies to allegory, and with the appearance of his metrical translation of the Song of Songs in 1788 [63] with introduction and comments, the allegorical theory comes to an end, after having held sway over men's minds for over 1700 years! But as the allegorical interpretation began to lose caste, another stumbling block to the interpretation of the book appeared in the theory which, regarding the songs as a literary unit, saw in them a dramatic composition with *dramatis personae* and a dramatic plot. That theory, which may be traced back to the sixteenth century, is still favored by many modern scholars. Let us see whether we are justified in calling it a stumbling block to a correct interpretation.

[62] With a play on Solomon's name which means "Peace."

[63] Herder's *Sämmtliche Werke* (ed. Suphan) vol. 8, pp. 489-588; and an earlier essay (1776), pp. 589-656.

CHAPTER IV

THE DRAMATIC THEORY

I

We have seen that the vague ideas regarding authorship that continued to prevail in Eastern lands even after the disposition arose to connect individuals with the composition of Biblical books brought it about that every book was looked upon as a literary unit. The *entire* Pentateuch was ascribed to one individual—Moses—as though he had written all of it. All the Psalms were assigned to David, all the Proverbs to Solomon, with a total disregard of the main feature common to all the books of the Old Testament—except possibly the Books of Ruth and Esther—that they do not emanate from one source but are composite in character, pieced together of various independent documents or sections. The Song of Songs in the same way, when it became associated with Solomon, was looked upon as being of one piece written by him and based on an episode of his own career. The assumption of literary unity—though entirely contrary to the actual method of ancient literary production—yet became a necessary corollary in the eyes of those who in an uncritical and unhistorical spirit were led to attach the names of individuals to productions that had come down from the past anonymously. But in the case of the Song of Songs the unit theory met with an obstacle in the fact that in some chapters it is clearly a maiden

who addresses her lover, while in others a swain addresses a maiden, and again elsewhere the maiden appears to be speaking to some companions or attendants. To string the chapters into an organic whole, it was necessary to assume a distribution of the chapters among various individuals. This was actually done by some of the editors of the Greek translation. As pointed out above, [64] two codices, one dating from the middle of the fourth century A. D., the other from the middle of the fifth century, add illustrative notes to the translation proper of the Song of Songs in order to indicate who the speakers are—"the bride," "the lover," and "the maidens," together with such further comments as "the bride to the maidens," "the bride to herself and to her lover," "the attendants to the maiden," "the lover to the bride," "the lover to himself." With this distribution carried through the eight chapters, it is evident that we have the nucleus of a dramatic theory for the Song of Songs. An Ethiopic translation of the Song of Songs based upon the Greek version actually divides the book into five separate pieces corresponding in a measure to five acts.

Taking as a single illustration the first little song (according to the division adopted by me) consisting of chap. 1, 2-4, the opening lines,[65]

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,
For thy breasts [66] are better than wine;

[64] Chap. 1. Rothstein in his *Grundzüge des Hebräischen Rhythmus*, pp. 97-104 has rendered a useful service in adding these comments from the two codices in question to his text of the songs.

[65] I follow here the Greek text as it stands.

[66] So the Greek translates here and elsewhere by a misunderstanding of the Hebrew term which actually means "love."

And the fragrance of thy oils is above all perfume;
Poured out oil is thy name."

are assigned in the two Greek codices to the *nymphe* the "bride," but at this point the *nymphos* "the lover" steps in and exclaims:

"Therefore the maidens have love to thee;
They have drawn thee;
After thee for the fragrance of thy oils let us run."

Then once more the bride, this time addressing her maidens:

"The king has brought me into his chamber,"

to which the maidens reply:

"We will rejoice and be merry with thee,
We will love thy breasts[87] above wine."

And then addressing the lover, the maidens add:

"Rightly she loves thee."

Every chapter was broken up in this way as fancy or judgment dictated, and distributed among those recognized as the participants. Since in the course of this distribution other characters are introduced as addressed or as speaking, "the maidens of Jerusalem," "the watchmen of the city," "daughters and queens," the list of participants becomes quite extensive, sufficient to form quite a good-sized company in a play.

II

But for the complete sway which the allegorical interpretation acquired, this nucleus of a dramatic theory might have been further developed by early

[87] Again in the Hebrew text the word for "love."

commentators. To be sure, a dramatic theory made no appeal to the Rabbis or to the Jewish exegetes of the Middle Ages because—except in so far as some were led to a philosophical or mystical interpretation[68]—they were absorbed in the endeavor to see throughout the eight chapters the evidence for Solomon's prophetic foresight in anticipating the fortunes of the chosen people and more specifically the relations of God to Israel, viewed under the imagery of lover and bride. Moreover, the drama was a species of literary composition entirely foreign to the point of view taken by the representatives of Jewish orthodoxy. There is no evidence that the Jews ever had any thought of a drama before they came into contact with the Greeks.[69] Somehow, it did not fit in with the frame of mind which produced the books of the Old Testament, although there are plenty of scenes in Old Testament narratives—like the folk-tales about Joseph—that have strikingly dramatic qualities.

That the first indication of a distribution of the songs among various participants in the manner of a drama is thus met with in notes attached to the Greek translation of the Song of Songs, may be traced to the influence of Greek culture, which found so notable an expression in the drama. For the Christian Church the Greek translation of the Old Testament, rather than the Hebrew original, became the standard text; and the Church Fathers, so largely of Greek origin or having Greek affiliations, were therefore more responsive to Hellenic literary methods. The alle-

[68] See the previous chapter.

[69] See the author's remarks on this subject in his *Book of Job*, p. 175 *seq.*

gorical theory, however, checked the further growth of the dramatic interpretation of the little book. Not that there is any inherent opposition between the two, or that the one would necessarily exclude the other, [70] but the allegorical theory forced any attempt to find any kind of setting to the book—dramatic, historical or otherwise—into the background, for the reason that the basic principle of the allegorical theory involved ignoring the surface meaning. Only the hidden meaning was supposed to furnish the key to the book. So Origen in his commentary propounds the view that the Song of Songs was an epithalamium, *i.e.*, a nuptial song "after the manner of a drama" [71] composed by Solomon to mark his marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh, referred to in the Book of Kings (I Kings 3, 1), but dismisses the suggestion as of no consequence by the side of the hidden meaning.

It is not until after the Protestant Reformation that we find the thought suggested by the comments to the Greek translation taken up and giving rise to the view that the Song of Songs is actually a dramatic composition. Cornelius a Lapide (1567-1637 A. D.) is among those who so regard it and he follows the classic model by dividing the book into five acts.

[70] There is in fact one instance in the "scenic" comments to the *Song of Songs* attached to the two codices which points to the allegorical interpretation. To chap. 4, 16, reading:

"Let my beloved come to his garden,"

the comment reads "the bride asks the father that his bridegroom may come." The word father is written in abbreviated form so that the application to God the father is not absolutely certain, but clearly "his bridegroom" can only refer to Christ.

[71] *in modum dramatis.*

Bossuet at the close of the seventeenth century [72] similarly anticipates the development of the dramatic theory by his view that the book consists of seven parts with a song for each day of the festivities of the marriage; and he harks back to Origen in assuming that the songs were written by Solomon to commemorate his marriage with the Egyptian princess. She is the beloved around whom the book hinges. The songs themselves represent the exchange of love sentiments indulged in by the royal pair, with the attendants of the bride acting as a kind of chorus.

A little later—in 1722—we find a German scholar, Georg Wachter, [73] going a step further in designating the book as "a play to be sung" (Singspiel)—what we would call an opera—and dividing it into a series of scenes. For Wachter it is, however, still a religious play and not a secular drama, and it is not until the close of the eighteenth century that we find a German scholar Staeudlin (1792) suggesting that the play was purely secular in character. With the more definite insistence upon the Song of Songs as an amatory exposition, the traditional assumption of the unity of the book led scholars by a logical train of thought to the dramatic interpretation. If Solomon was the participant and the author, what could the Song of Songs be except a dramatic poem illustrative of one of the king's love affairs. The songs being obviously placed in the mouths of different individuals they could only be strung together by being grouped around some central incident. Both Bishop Lowth (1753) and Percy (1764) favored the view that the

[72] See the previous chapter.

[73] *Das Hohe Lied Des Salomo* (Memmingen, 1722).

incident was the marriage with the Egyptian princess, but this theory was carried *ad absurdum* by an English scholar, Harmer,[74] who saw in the songs the successive incident of a triangular situation created by Solomon when he decided to add to his Jewish wife a "gentile" partner. According to Harmer, the name of the Jewish wife is Sulamith who is mentioned by name in chap. 7. The opening chapters describe Solomon going out to meet his Egyptian bride, who professes her love for him. He responds by praising her beauty and her charms in rapturous terms. The king brings the princess to Jerusalem in a triumphal wedding procession. All goes well up to this point. In chapter 5 the trouble begins. The jealous Sulamith discovers the newly wedded pair seated in a garden and exchanging tender sentiments. A domestic quarrel ensues. Sulamith upbraids Solomon, who tries to reconcile his first wife to having a rival. The Egyptian princess intervenes and adds fresh fuel to the conflagration. Solomon makes a final appeal to Sulamith which she rejects, but strangely enough she does not leave the king. It is still stranger that Harmer should not have asked himself the question why Solomon thus chose to reveal his domestic entanglements to the rude gaze of posterity.[75]

III

The Egyptian princess was introduced into the situation from a desire to connect the book with some

[74] *The Outlines of a New Commentary on the Song of Songs* (London, 1768).

[75] It should be added that Harmer, who could not cut loose from some kind of allegorical interpretation, saw in this domestic scene the picture of the attitude of the Jewish Church towards the rival Christian Church.

incident in Solomon's career actually noted in the narrative of his reign. With the freedom from such compulsion the far more reasonable theory was evolved that the triangle was represented, not by a husband with two wives, but by a maiden with two lovers. Because, as pointed out in chapter 7, the name Sulamith appears as that of the maiden addressed in this particular song, it was concluded that the beloved so passionately adored was throughout the songs one and the same. Hence Sulamith became the heroine of the book. Incidentally, we here encounter one of the weaknesses of the dramatic theory, for surely in writing a drama an author would not wait till close to the end of the play before revealing the name of the chief participant. By the side of Sulamith there is the rustic swain to whom she is passionately attached. Solomon appears on the scene and threatens the happiness of the young pair. Sulamith is brought into the king's harem, where the king, carried away by her beauty, tries to win her love, but is finally foiled in his endeavor and Sulamith is restored to her lover. In this form the dramatic theory was first fully developed by J. T. Jacobi [76] in a work that blazed a path in which others soon followed. Dividing the songs between Sulamith and the king he assumed that when the former addresses her true love, she is merely expressing her longing for him. The lover does not actually appear in the drama. By the side of Sulamith and Solomon, we have merely the women of the palace whom Jacobi finds in the

[76] Jacobi's work, published in 1771, bore the elaborate title (in English translation) "The Song of Songs freed of the reproaches cast upon it, by a simple and natural explanation."

"maidens of Jerusalem," addressed in a number of the songs by Sulamith, and occasionally addressing her (*e.g.*, 5, 9; 6, 1). He saw in the book no other purpose than to illustrate "conjugal fidelity," for he assumes that Sulamith was married to a shepherd at the time that she was unwillingly brought to the king's palace in Jerusalem.

The theory seemed simple and attractive; and it may be admitted that if we are to assume that the "king" introduced into the first chapter is Solomon, the conclusion is almost forced upon us, on the further assumption that the book represents a connected narrative and is a literary unit, that the majority of the songs at all events are to be placed in the mouths of Solomon and a maiden. It is not surprising, therefore, as long as those three assumptions were accepted, that the dramatic theory should have found an increasing number of advocates. An advantage of the theory was that it was not affected by the Solomonic authorship. The famous Biblical scholar Ewald who, as long ago as 1826, when he published his first work on the Song of Songs, rejected the Solomonic authorship, became a powerful advocate of the dramatic theory which he still maintained in his later work. [77] Franz Delitzsch, on the other hand, who clung to the traditional view, [78] likewise regarded the Song of Songs as a "melodrama." Variations in the plot as well as in the *mise en scène* were introduced in considerable number as one scholar after another tried his hand at distributing the parts among the *dramatis*

[77] *Dichter des Alten Bundes* (Göttingen, 1867), vol. 2, pp. 333-336.

[78] *Das Hohe Lied* (Leipzig, 1851), amplified in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes* (Edinburgh, 1891).

personae and in supplying scenic directions. Delitzsch assumes six acts and divides each act into two scenes.

Renan, who in 1860 published his *Cantique des Cantiques*, returns to the earlier view of five acts divided into twelve scenes and an epilogue, while Rothstein, a more recent commentator,[79] recognizes four acts (though he prefers to call them 'parts') with twenty-four subdivisions, corresponding to scenes.

Scholars allowed their imagination free scope in filling out the details of the dramatic situation. Ewald, combining great scholarship with a very active imagination that shows itself in all of his historical work, evolves out of his fancy how Solomon on one of his excursions, accompanied by a large escort, comes to a village, Shulam, and there sees a handsome maiden dancing in a garden. The king is immediately enamoured and is encouraged by the ladies of his court to take the maiden to his palace in Jerusalem, where he tries to woo her and make her forget the rustic lover to whom her heart belongs. Taking every allusion in the songs as biographical, Ewald even paints for us the surroundings of Sulamith, the sad experiences that she had because of the early death of her father [80] and because of rough treatment by her brothers and more the like. All this was purely fanciful, and in fact the dramatic theory led to extravagances quite as much as did the allegorical interpretations. It was a case of every scholar "doing

[79] *Grundzüege des Hebräischen Rhythmus*, (1909) pp. 348-49.

[80] He concludes this because in the Songs the father is never referred to, but only the mother and the brothers.

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what seemed right in his eye." Even Renan allowed his imagination to run away with him and in the introduction to his translation represents the abduction of Sulamith or the Shulamite,[81] as he more correctly calls her, as a forcible one carried out by the attendants of the king. Solomon becomes a veritable Don Juan, and only when he realizes how hopeless is the outlook of ever inducing Sulamith to forget her swain does he consent to her release. Renan also surpasses his predecessors in extending the list of the *dramatis personae*. He introduces the young shepherd into the play, instead of having him merely apostrophized by the maiden sighing in the royal harem for her lover and for the green fields. The shepherd enters "brusquely on the scene" (as Renan's stage direction reads) towards the close of the first act, just after Sulamith had begun her song:

> "I am the lily of Sharon;
> The narcissus of the valleys,"[82] (2, 1.)

to which the lover voicing his distress at finding his darling in a harem:

> "Like a lily amidst thorns,
> So is my beloved among the maidens." (2, 2.)

He further differentiates between the ladies of Solomon's harem and the women of Jerusalem, and introduces by the side of them a separate chorus. He also adds to the list of participants the brothers of Sulamith, citizens of Jerusalem, attendants of Solo-

[81] The term used designates a maiden from Shulam; it is not a proper name. See further at the close of this chapter.

[82] So Renan's translation. For mine see Song No. v.

mon, maiden friends of the shepherd, and a sage drawing the moral of the play. [83]

Renan's eminent scholarship and his exquisite literary taste—not to speak of his seductive style and unexcelled charm of presentation—justify us in taking his interpretation of the Song of Songs as representative of the best results to be achieved in following the dramatic theory. Besides, in a general criticism of this theory, it really is of little consequence whether a scholar confines himself to a few characters for the dramatic setting or expands their number to form a full company, just as it is immaterial whether he divides the book into four, five or six acts, into twelve scenes as Renan does, or assumes a smaller number. The general setting in all presentations of the dramatic theory is the same—Solomon, Sulamith and the rustic lover are the three chief personages. Sulamith is brought into the royal palace by the king's orders or with his connivance. Solomon tries to win her, but the maiden remains true to her rustic lover, who, responding to her passionate outburst, is transported with joy in having her restored to him.

At the outset of a criticism of the dramatic theory a general observation cannot be suppressed. What a strange subject for a Hebrew dramatist to choose! Renan rejects the tradition of Solomonic authorship, though he is of the opinion, as he sets forth at length, [84] that the dramatic poem was written within half a

[83] *Le Cantique des Cantiques*, p. 72. The attendants of Solomon and the maiden friends of the shepherd are "*personages muets.*" The sage appears only in the last act.

[84] Pages 91-114 of his Introduction to his *Cantique des Cantiques.*

century after Solomon's death. [85] This at least relieves Solomon of the odium of deliberately exposing himself as a Don Juan or a Faust, and an unsuccessful one at that. But why should any Hebrew writer be led to hold up the great ruler in such an unfavorable light as he appears in the drama? Renan, Ewald and others who faced this question did not hesitate to draw the conclusion that the poem was written with the intent of holding up Solomon to ridicule as foiled in his endeavors, and with the additional purpose of reflecting on the manners of the royal court which affected city life, in contrast to the purity and simplicity and attachment to fine ideals of love in the villages that stood remote from the influence of the capital. The poem emanated therefore from some one who was out of sympathy with the current view of the glorious reign of the *grand monarque*. In order to account for the unfavorable light in which Solomon appears in the Song of Songs, it is maintained that the composition reflects the attitude of the northern kingdom of Israel towards the Judaean kingdom in the south, from which the former separated after the death of Solomon.

This purely hypothetical assumption illustrates the difficulties in which one becomes entangled so long as we retain any particle of the tradition which associates Solomon with the songs—except for purely incidental references to him. Whatever force the hypothesis might have, that the Song of Songs was aimed *against* Solomon, disappears the moment we recognize, as the language of the poem shows, that

[85] Towards the middle of the tenth century B. C., according to the chronology adopted by Renan.

the book—particularly if viewed as a unit—could not have originated till at least six centuries after Solomon, at which time there was surely no occasion for indulging in a satirical attack on him or on his reign.

Franz Delitzsch, who recognized that there was not the slightest warrant for any such *tendenz* in the composition and who yet clung to the dramatic theory as well as to the idea that Solomon was the author, removes the difficulty by eliminating the rustic lover. According to him, the lover throughout the book is Solomon, who "condescends to occupy the sphere of life and thought of the shepherdess" of whom he is genuinely enamoured and who returns his passion. He is right in removing the third personage, but he should have eliminated Solomon. Delitzsch calls the song a "dramatic pastoral." [86] Its theme is pure love. There is no abduction into a harem. Sulamith is with the women of the palace when the action begins and her only distinction from her companions is that she has by her beauty and charm aroused the true love of her royal lord, while the others are merely his mistresses. The objection to this view is that it eliminates all the elements of a drama. There is no plot, no conflict, no action—nothing except a series of exchanges of tender and beautiful sentiments, with the women of the harem occasionally present as unjealous listeners to the rhapsodies of the two lovers—Solomon and Sulamith—or to Sulamith describing the grace and beauty of her lover from whom she is separated. Delitzsch admits that the "Song of Songs

[86] *Commentary to the Song of Songs* (English translation), p. 8.

is not a theatrical piece," [87] and he recognizes also the inherent weakness in any dramatic theory in the shortness of the scenes, whether one accepts twelve scenes, as Delitzsch proposes, or fifteen as Ewald would have it, or twelve and an epilogue as Renan suggests.

Apart from the difficulties of finding a proper setting to the Song of Songs if we assume it to be a drama and a reasonable motive for *any* setting that one might devise, another fundamental objection to the dramatic theory is the absence of any proof for the existence of the drama as a division of literature among the Hebrews. It is strange that Delitzsch and Renan, who both fully recognize this [88] and indeed emphasize the point that the Hebrews knew nothing of the drama until after the contact with Greek culture, should nevertheless have clung to an interpretation of the Song of Songs that contradicts the assumption from which they start out. If Ewald, Delitzsch and Renan were right in assigning an early date for the Song of Songs, our book would be the oldest drama in the world—and that among a people who never cultivated the drama! Renan is at great pains to show that the absence of the drama is actually a defect in the literature of the Hebrews due to the absence or suppression of mythology among them, as not compatible with an austere conception of unity in the Universe. He is certainly right in his claim that mythology is the source of the drama wherever, as among the Greeks and the Hindus, we find it. The fancied

[87] *Ib.*

[88] Delitzsch in his *Commentary*, p. 9, and Renan, *Le Cantique des Cantiques*, pp. 80-86.

representation of occurrences in nature—the change of seasons, the conflict between night and day, the struggle between the storms and the sun, and the like, with the gods as the *dramatis personae*—leads to the drama. Hebrew monotheism necessarily suppressed any tendencies towards the unfolding of a drama, if such ever existed. It is, therefore, not an accident that we do not encounter any drama in the Old Testament. All attempts to see a drama in the Book of Job are necessarily abortive. [89] Why then should the Song of Songs be a drama even if we bring the composition down to a late date, seeing that even in the days of Herod, as Josephus informs us, [90] the construction of a theatre in Jerusalem —the first of the kind—aroused strong opposition.

To escape from the contradiction in which he involves himself, Renan has recourse to another assumption that the Song of Songs was written to be performed to the accompaniment of music *en famille* as part of the wedding festivities. He takes up the suggestion first made by Bossuet [91] that the book is to be divided into subdivisions corresponding to the seven days of the marriage festivities. Ewald similarly distributes the four acts into which he divides the book among four days. The performance of the entire four or five or six acts— whatever division one accepts—would not have lasted more than an hour, if indeed so long. Is it conceivable that a play supposed to represent a unit would be broken up into ten-minute scenes?

[89] See the author's *Book of Job*, p. 177 *seq.*
[90] *Antiquities* XV, 8, 1; *Jewish Wars* I, 21, 8—quoted by Renan.
[91] Above, chapter II.

IV

We touch here upon another fundamental objection to the dramatic theory. The scenes into which the supposed drama is divided are entirely too short to produce any effect. The entire first act according to Renan consists of only twenty-four verses and this act is divided into three scenes, or according to Delitzsch, into two scenes. The second act of only fifteen verses is divided into two scenes. The entire fourth act with a single scene consists of eighteen verses; and so on. In this fourth act, Sulamith is practically the only participant, for the "chorus of women" merely interrupt her soliloquy by proposing two questions. There is no action whatsoever in this act—nothing but a soliloquy in which the maiden describes a night visit paid by her lover and then passes on to a detailed description of his beauteous form. And this is an entire act in a play! No action—merely descriptive poetry, as indeed throughout the book we have descriptions which those who advocate the dramatic theory take as the means of *indicating* action.

If we look at these subdivisions of the book into acts and scenes more closely, we shall see that the advocates of the dramatic theory are obliged to proceed in most arbitrary fashion. For example, Renan opens the second act with the beautiful song commencing,

"Hark! the voice of my beloved." (2, 8.)

The song of Sulamith continues from 2, 8, to the end of the chapter. She is supposed to be alone, and there-

fore with chapter 3 Renan introduces another scene with the lover present. Why? Because at verse 5 of this chapter there is the refrain,

"O maidens of Jerusalem, I charge you," etc.,

which, as at the close of the first act, Renan gives to the lover. But why should he not also have been present at the previous song or recitation? Outside of this refrain, the lover has no part at all in the supposed second scene. The refrain is addressed by the lover to the chorus of women who also suddenly appear on the scene, although there is no reason why they should not have been present in the first scene. But why need the refrain be uttered by the lover? It is just as effective and far more natural for the love-sick maiden to address the refrain to the chorus, especially since in the first act, according to Renan, the Shulamite is actually speaking to the chorus:

"Stay me with raisins;
Refresh me with apples.
His left arm caressing my head,
His right one embracing me." (2, 5.)

What is more natural than for her to continue,

"O maidens of Jerusalem I charge you,
By the gazelles and hinds of the field,
Arouse ye not and disturb not
Until love is satiated." (2, 7.)

One has a feeling that the reference is assigned to the lover in order to give him something to do. Indeed throughout the five acts Renan is at great pains to find lines for the lover. Considering that he is one of three chief personages, he has besides the refrain only one verse (2, 2) in the first act, merely the re-

frain in the second act, nothing at all in the fourth act, two verses in the first scene of the fifth act (6, 8-9), the refrain again (8, 4) in the third scene of this act and one verse (8, 13) in the epilogue—six verses in all. Only in the third act is a long speech given to him 2, 8-16, and after an interruption of one verse by the beloved, also 5, 1, with which this third scene of the act ends—sixteen verses in all the five acts! This third scene is supposed to take place at night. Solomon in the second scene (4, 1-6) has been apostrophizing Sulamith:

> "Ah! thou art fair, my darling,
> Ah! thou art fair," etc.

The third scene opens with Solomon still singing:

> "Thou art altogether fair, my darling,
> And there is no spot in thee." (4, 7.)

At this point the rustic lover appears and sings his one long song. But if one reads the chapter it is clear that 4, 7 is the close of the song beginning at the fourth chapter. There certainly can be no interruption at this point. In order to introduce the shepherd Renan has a stage direction to indicate that the shepherd is standing at the foot of the tower of the harem, while Solomon is inside with Sulamith. All this is purely fanciful. Would the king be likely to listen patiently to this uncomfortable intruder, coming on the scene at a most awkward juncture, without a word of protest? Solomon not only refrains from uttering a single word, but disappears from the scene apparently until the fifth act, when he again addresses a love song to Sulamith (6, 4-7) which is just as appro-

priate in the mouth of the rustic lover to whom the continuation (6, 8) is actually given.

Without burdening the reader with too many details, let me register one final point against the dramatic theory. There is only one bit of action in the play, the removal of Sulamith from the harem at the end, but since, according to the distribution of the roles, Sulamith and her lover are brought together at the end of the second act, when they fall into each other's arms and the shepherd adjures the chorus not to disturb them, why should he not have carried his beloved away with him at that point? The second act ends like the first with the same refrain, and the lovers locked in each other's arms. Here is a second chance again not utilized by the passionate lover, for some reason which the advocates of the dramatic theory do not reveal. Instead of rescuing his beloved, even at the risk of his life, nothing happens, and we find the shepherd in the fourth and fifth acts, in the small part assigned to him, speaking to his beloved or soliloquizing outside of the harem, while Solomon continues to make love to the maiden. The rescue of Sulamith—the *only* action in the play—is in fact nowhere indicated. Solomon continues his role of trying to win the love of Sulamith. The passionate description of her charms (7, 2-9) is assigned to Solomon. Sulamith remains adamant:

> "I am my lover's
> And his desire is towards me." (7, 11.)

when suddenly we find her addressing her lover:

> "Come, my love, let us go forth into the fields,"

which is supposed to be the sign for the departure of the happy pair. Once more the lover is represented merely by the refrain:

"O maidens of Jerusalem, I charge you," (8, 4.)

and the scene ends. In the next and final one, the shepherd is supposed to have carried his precious burden to Shulam and the chorus, seeing him approaching with the sleeping Sulamith in his arms, exclaims:

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness
Supported by her lover?"[92] (8, 5.)

Is it conceivable that any dramatist would thus bring the play to a close without a word from Solomon? According to the dramatic theory, Solomon, impressed by the steadfastness of the maiden and her resistance to all allurements, permits her to be reunited with her lover. But surely there would somewhere have been an indication of such generous action. A strange drama indeed, beginning with an abduction, which must be assumed, and ending with a release which is not indicated and which might, moreover, have been carried out long before the fifth act is reached!

V

If any further proof were needed to reinforce the arguments to be advanced against the dramatic theory, it would be found in the very literal interpretation which, to illustrate the supposed setting of the drama, its advocates are forced to apply to the poetical metaphors which form one of the most impressive pictures of the Song of Songs.

[92] So Renan's translation. The text actually says "leaning upon her lover."

When Sulamith says:

"My own vineyard I did not guard," (1, 6.)

we are asked to regard this as Sulamith's confession of her carelessness in allowing herself to be abducted into the king's harem.

When Sulamith, supposed to be addressing her absent lover, declares:

"Our bed is a bed of verdure," [93]

Solomon takes up the cue and continues:

"The beams of our palace [94] are cedar;
Our rafters are cypresses." (1, 17.)

with a view to tempting Sulamith by the splendors of the royal residence. And so throughout the book to the end. In the very last scene, according to Renan's arrangement,

"Under the apple tree I awakened thee," (8, 5.)

is placed in the mouth of the rustic lover who, having carried off Sulamith from the harem to her native village, places her—asleep in his arms—under an apple tree and there awakens her. Pointing to her mother's house he continues:

"There where thy mother gave thee birth."

The flavor of poetry is dissipated by such attempts at localization, to which, however, all the advocates of the dramatic theory, while differing in the details of the application, are led because of the total absence of indications of any action in the book itself. If we look at the speeches or songs distributed

[93] So Renan's rendering.
[94] So Renan. The text says "house."

among Solomon, Sulamith and the lover, or divided between Solomon and Sulamith (according to those who regard the lover as merely addressed, but not present in the drama), we shall see that there is no suggestion of any kind of dramatic setting. Even on the assumption of literary unity, there is no continuous narrative but merely a series of dialogues on one and the same theme. Instead of action, we have description. The lover and beloved describe each other; they describe what has happened to them—in reality or in a dream—or what they hope will happen; and it is precisely because the advocates of the dramatic theory are obliged to take the descriptions in the book as substitutes for action that they are led to make the effort to localize every allusion in the description that *might* point to some action either in the past or in the present. To do so however, is to sacrifice the poetry of the book for a theory of interpretation which, we have seen, will not endure any of the various tests that may be applied to it.

The dramatic theory is also obliged to assume that the maiden throughout the book is one and the same—a specific maiden. Because in the seventh chapter the name Sulamith occurs, Sulamith becomes the heroine of the supposed drama. But this Sulamith is a creation of the commentators. Sulamith [95] is not even a proper name but merely a designation of any girl who hails from a place Shulam or Shunem which appears to have been famed for its handsome women. From Shulam the courtiers of David ob-

[95] See on the various forms of the name, the comment to chapter 7, 1 (note 3 Song No. XVIII)

tain a handsome damsel to warm the heart of the aging monarch (I Kings 1, 3). A Shulamite is therefore used in the book merely as a honorific term to describe a beautiful maiden, as we might call a handsome dark-eyed young girl a Spanish beauty or a very *chic* one a veritable Parisienne. But with this explanation of the name, the theory that there is always one and the same specific maiden addressed throughout the chapter falls to the ground, as does the corresponding assumption that a specific rustic lover is meant.

The maiden and the swain are both anonymous, for the very good reason that any maiden or any lover is meant. The beloved is simply "my darling" and the lover is "my lover"—terms of the most general application. Nowhere is there a hint that any specific maiden or any specific swain is referred to.

We have now reached the root of the real difficulty in the Song of Songs and which is the cause of the hold that the dramatic theory took when it was first developed—the association of the Song of Songs with Solomon, to which, as we have seen, even those clung who abandoned the theory of Solomonic authorship. If a specific individual like Solomon enters into the setting of the book, then we must perforce identify the maiden throughout the chapters with some definite village beauty and the lover with some specific rustic lover. With Solomon eliminated, however, we have simply a pair of lovers— any pair of lovers. The bottom drops out of any dramatic theory. In other words the elimination of Solomon leads by a logical process to the abandonment of the

literary unity of the book. There is no continuous narrative; and with two lovers exposing their sentiments for each other, *occasionally* in dialogue but by no means always, there is of course nothing that can in the remotest way be connected with a drama. Instead of stringing the songs of the book together in the hope of finding either a narrative or a dramatic setting, we must regard them as a collection of songs in which a lover pours out his soul to his beloved and in which a beloved is enraptured of her lover. Instead of a literary unity we must seek for a unity of theme. That theme forms the connecting link between the songs.

CHAPTER V

A COLLECTION OF TWENTY-THREE LOVE LYRICS WITH A UNITY OF THEME

I

It seems almost cruel to submit a collection of naïve and delicate love songs to a cold critical analysis—like tearing the petals of a flower at the risk of losing the indefinable fragrance. Nor would this be necessary in the case of a collection like the Song of Songs, were it not for the strangely distorted views that, as we have seen, were current about the book until a reaction in favor of a saner view set in towards the close of the eighteenth century.

But even at the present time a misleading association of the Song of Songs with King Solomon is still strong enough to prevent a proper approach towards the book. The average person, when the Song of Songs is mentioned, is apt immediately to think of Solomon as having something to do with the songs, if not as their author, then as portrayed in them. A tradition always dies hard and its ghost is apt to crop up even when we think that it has been safely buried.

Those who have followed the exposition of the subject up to this point and have seen how the Solomonic tradition arose need hardly be told that we must eliminate Solomon altogether—except for the incidental reference to him in the phrase "Solomonic curtains" (1, 5) and as an illustration of royal gran-

deur in the last chapter (8, 11-12)—if one really wishes to understand the book. In the three other passages (outside of the late heading which reflects the Solomonic tradition)[96] in which the name Solomon is introduced—all three in Chapter 3—we have seen that Solomon in two instances (verses 9 and 11) has been added to the word "king"—as the metrical construction shows[97]—and in the third case (v. 7) "which is to Solomon" is added as an explanation to "his litter"—itself a gloss to explain by a more common term a foreign word for "litter."[98]

There remain then merely the four occurrences of the word "king" (1, 4 and 12, and 3, 9 and 11) to be accounted for. With the proof furnished by Wetzstein[99] and other witnesses to marriage customs still prevailing in modern Syria and Palestine that it is customary to address the bridegroom and bride as "king" and "queen" during the week of the marriage festivities, the explanation of the "king" in our book lies, therefore, close at hand and, moreover, reinforces the general view to be taken of it as a collection of love poems. The "king" is a purely honorific designation, to be compared with our "king of the revels" or the "queen of the May" and the many other fanciful applications of king and queen in popular customs, such as the king and queen of roses, the grass king, the leaf king, king of the

[96] See note 1 to Song No. 1.

[97] In both cases the addition of Solomon gives to the line an additional beat. See note 11 to Song No. IX.

[98] See note 9 to Song No. IX.

[99] *Die Syrische Dreschtafel*, (*Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 1873, p. 287 *seq.*) and also in the comments added by Wetzstein to Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, pp. 162 *seq.*; also Budde, *Das Hohe Lied*, p. 17; Haupt, *Book of Canticles*, p. 23.

rice, king of the harvesters, king of the fire, king of the summer, king of the wood, king of the years, and more the like.[100] With her lover enthroned in her heart, what more natural for a maiden than thus to glorify the chosen one by bestowing on him a title that corresponds to her exalted estimate of him? He is her "king," her liege lord to whom she willingly pays homage. It so happens that in these songs the beloved is not addressed or spoken of as queen, but it is equally natural for the passionate lover to think of his idealized maiden as his queen. That is actually the case in villages of modern Syria. Royal homage is accorded to the bridal pair who for seven days are addressed as *melk* ("king") and *melka* ("queen"). The omission of "queen" in the Song of Songs may be due to the minor part that the queen plays in the royal circles of the ancient Orient. There is one king, but there are many queens in a royal harem. It would not, therefore, be a special mark of distinction to call one's beloved a queen for fear that she might regard herself merely as one of many.

> "Sixty queens,
> And eighty concubines
> And maidens without number.
> But one is my dove, my perfect one." (6, 8, 9.)

The bride is, however, addressed as a princess in one passage:

> "How beautiful are thy feet in sandals
> * * * * O nobleman's daughter." (7, 1.)

This view that the "king" is merely the glorified lover is borne out, if we look at the passages in which the

[100] See the references in the Bibliography and Index to Frazer's *Golden Bough*. (3rd ed., vol xiv) p. 333.

term is applied and which picture for us the bridal chamber and the bridal procession:

"Draw me, O king into thy chamber. (1, 4.)
* * * * * *
As long as the king was on his couch,
His nard sent forth its fragrance." (1, 12.)

The maiden longs to be alone with her lover. She imagines that she has been united to him and that he has led her into the bridal chamber. To her the union takes on all the glory of a royal wedding:

"The beams of our house are cedars
Our rafters cypresses." (1, 17.)

With the canopy of heaven over them, the fields or the groves in which they enjoy the delights of love are pictured as a royal palace, made of the choicest woods.

In the third chapter,—the ninth song according to the enumeration adopted in this volume—a bridal procession is described—magnified to suggest a triumphant royal entry. The "queen" is being brought in a conveyance, surrounded by a large escort and the "king" comes out to meet his royal partner. It was customary for the bride and bridegroom in ancient Palestine to wear wreaths[101]—as we still have the wedding wreath for the bride; and the wreath suggests a royal crown. The playfulness of the entire scene is brought out by having the mother of the bridegroom prepare the wreath for her son:

"Go forth and gaze on the king
On the day of his nuptials,
With the crown with which his mother crowned him
On the day of the gladness of his heart." (3, 11.)

[101] See note 19 to Song No. IX.

Were a real crown and a real king meant, the poet would have expressed himself differently.

Now with Solomon out of the way, let us look at the eight chapters just as they stand. Let us suppose that some one has brought us this little book for examination. Without having any preconceived notions about it, what should we find in it? What, indeed, but outbursts of passionate love? As we turn the leaves of our manuscript or the pages of our book, we find now a maiden sighing for the kisses of her lover, now a lover longing for the embraces of the girl of his heart. Alternating with a glowing description of the beauty of the lover on the part of the maiden we have the lover breaking out in praise of the charms of his beloved. Now the maiden describes herself and again she sings a song, voicing her feelings at the mere thought of the approach of her lover. She sees him in dreams and imagines herself united with him. He on his part describes in poetic metaphors the delights of love, and his joy passes beyond all bounds at the prospect of enjoying the sweets of companionship with her. Interspersed are little love songs, full of erotic allusions and all giving expression to the joy of love and of youthful passion.

Such—briefly summarized—is the general character of the theme which like a melody runs through the book and upon which so many variations are played. Why, then, seek for something additional? Ah! But the literary unity! Is there not some thread to be distinguished in the collection that connects the songs? If there is one theme, one melody with vari-

ations, is there not some system to be detected in the combination and order of the variations? Let us see.

II

The simplest test is to see whether we can discern a cement uniting the subdivisions which by general consent are to be recognized in the book. I say by general consent, for even while the allegorical interpretation held sway it was admitted that the book could be broken up into definite subdivisions. These subdivisions formed the basis for the separation into acts and scenes, set up by those who adopted the dramatic theory. To be sure, no agreement was ever reached as to the number of such divisions.

The conventional division into eight chapters assumes eight such subdivisions, for each chapter begins with a new variation of the theme. A glance, however, suffices to show that within each chapter further subdivisions must be made. An old poetic version in middle High German, dating from the fifteenth century, divides the book into as many as forty-four subdivisions and sets down each as a little song, [102] using as headings the opening line in the Latin translation—the so-called Vulgate—on which the German paraphrase is based. This number is somewhat too large, just as, on the other hand, the division into seven parts proposed by Bossuet,[103] to correspond to the seven days of the marriage festivities, or even sixteen as Reuss proposed, is too small.

[102] It is one of the many merits of Herder to have called attention to this interesting poetic paraphrase. He reprinted the paraphrase as a supplement to his essay on the *Song of Songs*. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed Suphan, vol. 8, under the title of *Nebst vier und vierzig alten Minneliedern*.

[103] *Praefatio in Canticum Canticorum*. Paris, 1693.

Herder, who was among the first to note the independent character of the songs to be distinguished in the collection, proposed twenty subdivisions and this comes close to being correct. In a few cases, one may be in doubt when a new song begins. This doubt is due to an endeavor on the part of later editors to connect songs by links, leading from the one to the other. The division of the book into four, five or six acts, with scenes up to as many as fifteen, on the part of those who hold to the dramatic theory is also a recognition that the book falls into natural subdivisions of a very definite kind, though under the influence of this view the breaks were made at places where the advocates of the dramatic theory believed that there was a change of scene. [104] A careful and prolonged study has convinced me that there are twenty-three little love lyrics in the collection, exclusive of some fragments.[105]

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[104] This prepossession accounts for the fact that Renan, *Le Cantique des Cantiques*, pp. 4-5, divided the book into 16 *Morceaux*. He combines little snatches of songs like 2, 15 (No. VII according to my interpretation) and 4, 8 (No. XI) with what precedes or with what follows, because such a procedure fits in with his view of scenic directions. Haupt (*Book of Canticles*, p. 18 *seq.*) recognizes only twelve independent songs, but he obtains this small number by his assumption that the verses have been thrown into confusion by uncritical editors and must therefore be rearranged. Each of his twelve songs is therefore a composite made up of verses chosen from any portion of the eight chapters that seem to make an appropriate mosaic. Dussaud (*Le Cantique des Cantiques*) similarly distributes the 117 verses at random so as to make four songs only. Such a wholesale transposition of verses necessarily opens the door for the exercise of a purely subjective judgment.

[105] The fragments are placed by me at the close of the translation. Budde (*Das Hohe Lied*) also recognizes 23 songs, but in a number of cases our subdivisions do not correspond. So, *e.g.*, he divides 2, 1-7 (Song No. v) into two songs (a) 1-3 and (b) 4-7. Chap. 4, 8 (Song No. XI) he regards as an insert and does not count as a song; chap. 5, 2-6, 3 he takes as one song, whereas I recognize three (Nos. XIV-XVI), etc. But these are minor differences; and it is curious that his total number is the same as mine.

II

Taking up the first chapter as an illustration of the method followed, it is evident that verses 2-4 form a separate song. The maiden expresses her longing for the kisses of her lover "sweeter than wine." She asks him to carry her off with him in order that she may enjoy his love:

> "There to be glad and be merry with thee,
> To be drunk with thy love more than wine."

With verse 5, beginning:

> "Swarthy am I but comely,
> O maidens of Jerusalem,"

a new song is introduced, sharply separated from the former one. The second song clearly ends with v. 6:

> "The keeper of the vineyards they made me,
> But my own vineyard I did not keep."

There is no connection beyond the general theme between the love languish expressed in the first song and the saucy tone of the second one, with its suggestion that the maiden gave "her vineyard"—that is herself—willingly to her lover. The address to the "maidens of Jerusalem," as well as a change in the metrical construction,[106] is also indicative of the independent character of this song.

An entirely new situation is introduced in what follows (1, 7-8). The beloved is seeking for her lover. Where is he to be found?

> "O tell me, beloved of my soul,
> Where thou feedest."

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[106] Hemistichs of three beats in the first song, of 3 and 2 beats in the second.

She hints that she may roam among his companions unless she finds her lover. With a pretty conceit the lover himself answers:

"Follow the tracks of the flock,
By the tents of the shepherds."

Thou knowest where I am to be found, he sings to her. Just follow the tracks of the flock and thou wilt soon be united with me.

Again verses 9 to 17, representing an exchange of sentiments between the swain and the maiden are sharply separated from what precedes.

The lover compares his darling to a noble steed, fit to be attached to a royal chariot, with a deft allusion to the royal dignity accorded to a wedded pair during the honeymoon period. The beloved responds to her "king," by singing of his sweetness as he lies on the "royal" couch, with his head on her lap, and close to her breasts. He is like nard, myrrh and henna to her—metaphors that we encounter again and again in these little songs, expressive of the fondness of Orientals of all times for sweet-smelling perfumes.

The scene is rendered as realistic as one could desire by the mutual expression on the part of the lovers of their fondness for each other:

"Ah, thou art fair, my darling
Ah, thou art fair."

To which the reply comes

"Ah, thou art fair, my love,
Ah, thou are sweet."

The closing verse sung in unison:

"The beams of our house are cedars;
Our rafters cypresses,"

shows that the royal couch is a pure fancy to fit in with the picture of royalty. The lovers are in the open air—in the fields or in a grove,—as is shown by the variant or comment added;

"Our couch is green."

Is there any reason to question after this rapid analysis that we have here four independent little songs united into one chapter? Each song conveys its own thought, each suggests a separate picture, each has its distinctive manner. The quality of each would be spoiled by any attempt to combine them into a continuous dialogue or to assume any kind of connected action so as to form a scene or two scenes in a narrative or in a drama. The little song (1, 5-6) which I have designated as "The Saucy Damsel" is a gem when taken by itself. It loses its delicacy if joined to what precedes. In the first song, the longing of a lovesick maiden for her lover is expressed. In the second, a bewitching maiden, knowing only too well that her sunburnt color adds to her attractiveness, hints that her lover has enjoyed her vineyard. In the former the picture suggested is that of two lovers united in bliss in some interior. In the latter the picture is that of a maiden guarding a vineyard during harvest time and thinking of her lover. There is no transition from one picture to the other. Similarly the third song takes us into the fields where the shepherds are tending the flocks—an entirely different setting; and this again is distinct from the dialogue in the fourth song where the happy pair are lying under the trees and enjoying the "Delights of Love" as this song may be entitled.

Passing on in this way, we encounter no special difficulty in recognizing that with the second chapter a new song begins, again a pretty exchange of compliments between beloved and lover, ending with a love sigh. The maiden sings

"The saffron of the plain am I,
The lily of the valleys,"

to which the lover replies

"As the lily among thistles,
So is my darling among maidens."

The refrain at the close (2, 7)

"O maidens of Jerusalem, I charge you,"

separates the fifth song from the following one—the famous "spring" song (2, 8-14):

"Hark, my love is coming,
Leaping over mountains,
Bounding over hillocks."

The change in the metrical arrangement [107] comes to confirm the view of the entirely independent character of this song. What more appropriate ending could there be to this outburst of joy at the return of spring with its call to the lovers than,

"Rise up, my darling, my dove,
In the clefts of the rock;
In the cleft's recesses,
Show me thy face, let me hear thee;
For sweet is thy voice,
And comely thy face." (2, 13-14.)

It may be, of course, as Renan and others would have us suppose, that what follows is a song by the beloved in response to her lover's request, but even

[107] Lines of three divisions, as against hemistichs in the previous song.

in that case, the song itself—or rather the snatch of it that we have—is an entirely independent composition as shown by the change in subject as well as by the change in metrical arrangement.

"Catch us the foxes,
The little foxes,
Spoiling the vineyards;
For our vineyards are in bloom." [108]

The song strikes a different note from that found in the "spring" song, just as a little further on (4, 8) we find another little snatch of a song (No. XI)—of two stanzas, with three subdivisions to each stanza or line,

"Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,
Come with me from Lebanon.
From the dens of the lions
Descend from the top of Amana,
From the top of Shenir,
From the mountains of the leopards."

It is a perfect little poem by itself, but loses its charm and its force through any attempt to connect it with what precedes—a description of the beauty of the bride—or with another outburst of passion aroused by the sight of the beloved that follows.

Now it may be, as already suggested, that the editor in compiling these songs may have been guided by some association of ideas in arranging the order of of the songs, [109] just as he or some other compiler through whose hands the songs passed, may have desired to connect the songs by repeating refrains here

[108] Hemistichs of three and two beats each. For the meaning of the erotic metaphors, see the notes to Song No. VII.

[109] See further on this possibility at the close of this chapter.

and there. There are several such refrains,[110] the most striking being the one beginning,

"O maidens of Jerusalem, I charge you," etc.

which forms an appropriate close at 2, 17 (Song No. v) but is evidently taken over from this song and attached at 3, 5 (Song No. vii) where it serves no purpose.

Similarly another refrain:

"Until the morning blows,
And the shadows flee," (4, 6.)

forms an appropriate close to the glowing description of the beloved (Song No. x), but is an inappropriate addition after the song of the "Foxes in the Vineyards" (2, 15, No. vii). We see clearly the work of the editor in adding two refrains after this snatch of a song, the one just referred to and another,

"My love is mine, and I am his,
Who feeds among the lilies." (2, 16.)

which is taken over from 6, 3 (Song No. xvi) where it fits in with the context.

With a variation, betraying a literary reference to Genesis 3, 16,[111] the refrain is once more added at 7, 11. Such transfers from one song to another may well represent the attempts of editors to string the songs together, by the side of endeavors also to establish a sequence in the arrangement of the songs. The attempts, however, are weak, indeed in some cases awkward, and the poems stand out more clearly if we remove such additions, where we can detect them.

[110] Put together by me after the 23rd song.
[111] See note 29 to Song No. xviii.

III

Another evidence for the independent character of all the songs in the collection is to be seen in the close resemblance among some of them. If the Song of Songs constituted a unit we would not have two dreams and four descriptions of the lover or beloved. Such repetitions show that we are on the wrong track in seeking for any continuous thread of a narrative running through the book. Let us look at these repetitions for a moment.

The two dreams are found (a) 3, 1-4 (Song No. VIII) and (b) 5, 2-8 (Song No. XIV). In both cases it is the beloved who sees her lover in a dream. The metrical arrangement is different in the two songs [112] and variations in the setting furnish an illustration of the resourcefulness of folk poetry in treating the same general incident. In both, the beloved is represented as asleep, but dreaming. The first begins,

> "By night as I lay on my bed,
> I sought the beloved of my soul." (3, 1.)

She rises up in her dream and goes about the city, seeking for her lover. The night watchmen find her and she asks them whether they have seen her lover. Suddenly she spies him, takes hold of him and brings him to her home:

> "Scarce had I passed from them
> When I found the beloved of my soul.
> I held him and would not let him go,
> Until I had brought him to the house of my mother." (3, 4.)

[112] Hemistichs of three beats each in the first song, but of three and two beats each in the second.

The other poem is more elaborate.

"I was asleep, but my heart was awake."

The "heart" being always in Old Testament usage the seat of the intellect, the phrase is a poetic one to indicate the dream—the mind being awake. In her dream, she hears her beloved knocking at the door for admission.

"Open to me, my sister,[113] my darling,
My dove, my perfect one;
For my head is filled with dew,
My locks with drops of the night."

A charming and realistic picture! As a chaste maiden she hesitates to admit him, but when the lover is about to withdraw, she cannot resist.

"I opened to my love,
But my love had turned away."

As in the first dream she now wanders through the city in search of him, but with less success. The watchmen find her and smite her. They strip her of her mantle—her only garment.[114] The dream ends as it began—with longing,

"O maidens of Jerusalem, I charge you
If you find my lover, that ye tell him
How lovesick I am." (5, 8.)

One need only read these two poems in succession to see that they are independent compositions, whereas on the assumption of any continuous narrative they would represent an inartistic repetition.

[113] For the use of the word "sister" see note 5 to Song No. XII.

[114] This touch shows that it is all a dream. Folk poetry would stop short at exposing a woman in reality.

At the same time we may again detect the hand of an editor in inserting in the first song a hemistich from the second.[115]

Still more striking as pointing to the fact that the Song of Songs is an anthology of independent lyrics are the four descriptions of the beloved or lover —each an independent poem, though in one case the description is taken over with slight variations from the first of these descriptive lyrics. Of the four poems, three sing of the beauty of the beloved (a) 4, 1-7 (Song No. x) which is repeated (b) 6, 6-7 (Song No. xvii), while (c) 7, 2-10 (Song No. xviii) is an independent treatment of the theme. The fourth, 5, 10-16 (Song No. xv) describes in detail the exquisite form and features of the lover.

Placing these poems side by side, it becomes evident that on the assumption that the eight chapters of our book form a unit—either a continuous narrative in poetic form or scenes in a drama—the three-fold repetition of the praise of the maiden's beauty would be meaningless. If now in addition we find that such descriptions of the beauty of the lover and the beloved are a feature in the love songs of the present-day Arabs in Palestine, the argument is clinched in favor of the explanation, obvious also for other reasons, that these four poems are so many specimens of *wasf* poetry, to use the technical Arabic term—signifying "description"—which is applied to Arabic love poems in which such descriptions occur.[116] Such *wasf* poems naturally

[115] See note 3 to Song No. viii and note 12 to Song No. xiv.

[116] See Dalman, *Palästinischer Diwan*, p. xi *seq.*; also Wetzstein in Delitzsch's *Commentary to the Song of Songs*, p. 172, and Budde, *Das Hohe Lied*, p. xviii.

bear a family resemblance to one another. Comparisons introduced in one may be repeated in another; and the same parts of the body—the eyes, lips, mouth, hair, arms, legs, breasts and belly—are introduced in all, though the order varies and according to the fancy of the folk-poet, some features are singled out in one *wasf*, others in another; and only occasionally is an exhaustive inventory of the beloved's charms or of the lover's beauty set forth.

In the first of the four *wasf* poems embodied in our collection, (4, 1-7, Song No. x) the eyes, hair teeth, lips, mouth, temple, neck and breasts are picked out for praise. Out of this long list, the hair, teeth, lips, mouth and temple are taken over into the second *wasf* (6, 6-7, Song No. xvii), while in the third (7, 1-10, Song No. xviii), the order of the description is reversed. Led to describing the bride's charms by seeing her dance, the folk-poet begins with the description of the graceful movements of the feet,

"How beautiful are thy steps in sandals,
* * O nobleman's daughter," [117]

he then passes upwards and names in succession the hips, the navel, the belly, the breasts, the neck, the eyes, the nose, the head and the hair. Equally detailed, though with the use of more reserved metaphors, is the *wasf* sung by the maiden in praise of her lover (5, 10-16, Song No. xv). She begins with the head and the locks and passes down to the eyes, the cheeks, and the lips, thence to the arms, body and

[117] Or "princess" as the Authorized Version has it.

legs; and reserves for the last the allusion to the embrace that unites the lovers:

"His mouth is sweetness,
And his whole being lovely."

These *wasfs* have the true flavor of folk poetry. They are simple and naïve; they ring true. The descriptions conform to the popular taste for women with clear soft eyes and with large features—a massive neck, huge breasts, prominent noses, all of which are still regarded as marks of special beauty in the East. Read in any other light than as expressions of the folk-spirit they become vulgar. They reflect the healthy passion of the lover as he sees his beloved dancing or advancing to meet him; they voice the equally hot feelings of the maiden when she thinks of the "beloved of her soul" or happily encounters him. We rob the poems of their beauty and their impressiveness by any attempt to string them together or to find traces of any "progressive" thought or action as we pass from the first to the last. They are simply four specimens of ancient Hebraic *wasfs*, included in one *Diwan* because of their beauty and their popularity, precisely as in a *Diwan* of modern Palestinian love songs a collector embodies the best of such *wasfs*. [118]

IV

We have thus passed in review seventeen of the twenty-three lyrics to be distinguished in our anthology; and what has been said of these applies to the

[118] Dalman in his *Palästinischer Diwan* furnishes six. A seventh will be found in Delitzsch's *Commentary to the Song of Songs*, p. 174 *seq.*; an eighth from modern Egypt is given by Lane, *Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians* (1851 ed.), vol. II, p. 78.

balance. Each is an independent composition. The bridal procession (3, 6-11, Song No. IX) is as sharply separated from what precedes—the dream—as it is to be detached from what follows—the first *wasf*. There are two songs in which the beloved is compared to a garden with luscious fruits—(a) 4, 12-5, 1 (Song No. XIII) and (b) 6, 1-3 and 11 (Song No. XVI) — at the disposal of the lover. Closely allied to these is the little song (4, 9-11; Song No. XII) in which the sweetness of the bride is compared to wine, honey and perfumes—for which likewise parallels are to be found in modern Palestinian love songs. Each of the five poems with which the collection closes introduces a distinct variation of the one theme that unites all the songs.

The beloved (7, 12-14, Song No. XIX) invites her lover to spend the night in the fields and to go to the vineyards.

> "Let us see whether the vine has budded;
> Its blossom has opened."

In the closing song (8, 11-12, Song No. XXIII), the vineyard *motif* is again introduced. The beloved is the vineyard (as in the second song) and her lover taking up the cue, claims the vineyard for himself,

> "My vineyard is mine—my own."

In another song the maiden sighs (8, 1-4, Song No. XX) that she must restrain her feelings. If her lover were only her brother, then she might kiss him unblushingly. Chastity is the theme of the little song (8, 8-10, Song No. XXII) in the form of a dialogue between a maiden and her brothers. Again,

standing by itself, is one of the gems of the collection—the description of the "Power of Love" (8, 5-7, Song No. XXII),

> "Place me as a seal upon thy hand
> As a seal upon thy arm.
> For love is strong as death,
> Firm as the grave."

Never has love's power been more eloquently and more simply sung! Only folk poetry is capable of giving expression in such simple language to the most compelling of human emotions! But the eloquence and simplicity alike vanish the moment we attempt to attach a moral to it, as Renan would have us do, who places this poem in the mouth of a sage summing up the teachings of the supposed play! The poem is the outburst of one who still feels the passion of love, not of one who reflects on it.

> "The darts of passion are darts of fire—
> Furious flames.
> Many waters cannot quench;
> Nor streams drown."

It is the folk poet, at an age when he still feels the power of love, who can say that all the wealth of the world is as nothing compared to love.

> "If a man were to give all (his) substance
> It would be as nought."

A question that still confronts us at the close of this analysis is—whether there is any order to be detected in the arrangement of the twenty-three lyrics. We have seen that there is evidence of an endeavor on the part of editors to connect the songs

by taking a "refrain" from one poem where it is in place and transferring it to another. It is therefore within the range of possibility that a more or less definite scheme was followed in the sequence of the poems. If we may assume—as we are certainly justified in doing—that the editors to whom we owe the present arrangement were under the influence of the Solomonic tradition, we can see why in the first chapter we should have four poems in which the "king," "Solomonic curtains" and the "royal" steed figure. There appears to be some association of ideas here dictating the grouping of these poems together. Consistently the description of the bridal procession (3, 6-11, Song No. XI) in which the "king" is likewise mentioned, and the Vineyard song (8, 11-12, Song No. XXIII) in which Solomon is directly introduced, should have followed, just as the two dreams (3, 1-4, Song No. VII and 5, 2-8, Song No. XIV) should have been placed together. Two of the *wasfs* follow one another, Song No. XVII and Song No. XVIII, but they are repeated from the other two and besides, the *wasf* section in No. XVII is taken over from No. X just as the two "garden" songs, (4, 12-5, 1, No. XIII and 6, 1-3 and 11, Song No. XVI) are separated. On the other hand, there appears to be a purpose in having the *wasf* of the lover (5, 10-16 Song No. XV) followed by the second of the garden songs (6, 1-3 and 11, Song No. XVI) since both poems are introduced by a question put to the maiden presumably by her companions. The reference to the "maidens of Jerusalem" in the second song (1, 5-6) may also have superinduced placing Song No. V (2, 1-7) near by

because of the refrain addressed to the "maidens of Jerusalem." Some further associations of ideas may be detected (if we seek hard enough) that may explain the sequence in other instances, but such possible associations do not suffice to outweigh the fact that for the arrangement as a whole no guiding principle can be found which will satisfactorily explain the order. It seems more natural to assume that the collection represents a gradual growth. One compiler began the process by putting together some songs that had attained wide popularity, others followed by adding their favorites, and so in the course of time the little anthology arose. The collection, we may further conjecture, represents a selection out of many such love poems that circulated among the people; and we have good reason to regret that more should not have been preserved. Nor does it by any means follow that those which have come down to us are the best, although it is fair to conclude that they were all regarded as favorites. They lived in the heart and in the thought of the people; hence, apart from their charm and exquisite poetic qualities, their value also as a testimony to the lighter sides of life in ancient Palestine.

Summing up, we have in our anthology, four *wasf* poems—or if we place No. IV in this category—five,[119] two "dream" songs,[120] three "vineyard" songs,[121] two "garden" songs,[122] a spring song,[123] a song

[119] Nos. X, XV, XVII, XVIII and No. IV.
[120] Nos. VIII and XIV.
[121] Nos. II, VII, XXIII.
[122] Nos. XIII and XVI.
[123] No. VI.

for the bridal procession,[124] a song on the power of love,[125] one on the chastity of the maiden,[126] and a miscellaneous group of songs expressive of the longing of lovers for union or the consummation, expressed in various ways.[127]

The songs thus run the gamut of love's scale—sighs alternating with kisses, passionate sexual outbursts with deeper and more delicate sentiments, simple ditties with more solemn stanzas—but all melodies on one and the same theme—the love that comes when one is young and life is still a fair dream.

[124] No. IX.
[125] No. XXI.
[126] No. XXII.
[127] Nos. I, III, V, XI, XII, XIX, XX.

CHAPTER VI

THE DATE, THE TEXT AND THE METRICAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE SONGS.

I

Is it possible to determine when the twenty-three lyrics which are to be distinguished in our collection were written? From what has been incidentally set forth in previous chapters, we can say with considerable definiteness that the collection as we have it could not have received its final form until the fourth century B. C. That is shown by the occurrence of a Persian word in one of the songs [128] and of a Grecian word in another. [129] The close contact of the Jews with Persia begins in the days of Cyrus (c 558 B. C.), that with Greece with Alexander's conquests in the East (c 332 B. C.). The language in many of the songs—though not in all—points to a late rather than to an early period. There are Aramaic words in the songs and Aramaic constructions characteristic of later books in the Old Testament like Koheleth and Daniel and many of the Psalms. [130] All this shows that the views of earlier scholars, who while abandoning Solomonic authorship were yet inclined to assign a relatively early date—the tenth or the ninth century B. C.—for the book, need to be modified. Grätz [131] would bring the date of the com-

[128] *Pardes*—Persian *paradaiza*, "Paradise," *i.e.*, a grove or a park. See note 8 to Song No. XIII.

[129] *Appiryôn*—Greek *phoreion*, a conveyance. (See note 8 to Song No. IX.)

[130] Collected by Grätz, *Das Salomonische Hohelied*, pp. 43-52.

[131] *ib.*, p. 90.

pilation as far down as towards the close of the third century B. C. This is quite possible, though not for reasons assigned by Grätz who presses allusions in the songs to existing customs too literally. Haupt [132] contents himself with a general indication that the songs were compiled during the Seleucid era, *i.e.*, after 312 B. C., which is also the view of Budde. [133] On the whole, the second half of the third century B. C., *i.e.*, after 250, seems more likely than the first half, for the reason that after the middle of the third century B. C. a reaction set in against the austere tendency in Jewish orthodoxy of which such books as Koheleth, with its freedom from conventional restraint, and the original book of Job with its decidedly skeptical tone, [134] are the outcome. Circles of independent thinkers among the Jews arose about this time, more worldly in their general outlook and therefore more sympathetic towards a secular theme such as marks the Song of Songs.

Beyond, however, such general determination, it is not safe to go. We must not press allusions in the Song of Songs to spices and perfumes that may have been imported from distant climes to the extent of fixing in this way a *terminus a quo*, simply because of the lack of evidence for commercial contact before a certain date with the lands in which the plants and trees alluded to are native. We must content ourselves with finding a confirmation of a comparatively late date for most of the songs by the allusion to

[132] *Book of Canticles*, p. 17.

[133] *Das Hohelied*, p. XXIII (in Marti's *Handkommentar zum Alten Testament*, Part XVII).

[134] See the author's *Book of Job*, pp. 26–28, 36.

"foreign" spices and perfumes and scented woods [135] —some of which may, indeed, have been imported from distant lands with which, so far as our evidence goes, no commercial intercourse existed until after the days of Alexander the Great. References to night watchmen making the rounds of the city, to marble columns, to ivory, to Tirzah as the rival of Jerusalem, to towers and to armies point to well organized social and political conditions. The frequent comparisons of love with wine, the songs about the vineyards, (viniculture always goes hand in hand with advanced conditions of settled life and particularly the last song (No. XXIII), in which allusion is made to a large estate, worked for profit as an investment, show that we are not dealing with a primitive society in these songs, though this does not exclude pictures of shepherds tending the flocks, as in the second song. It must also be borne in mind that an approximate date for the editing of the songs does not settle the age of the songs themselves. Each one must be tested by itself from the point of view of language and from the references and allusions contained in it. Some of the songs may be considerably older than others; and folk poetry is furthermore subject to modifications. Variant lines may be introduced as the songs pass from mouth to mouth or from village to village. The song may be adapted to later conditions, as we know to be the case with many Psalms which consist of a substructure that is old and on which a

[135] Most of the spices and perfumes and scented woods named in the *Song of Songs* are foreign words such as cinnamon, aloes, saffron, nard and kopher ("henna").

superstructure of much later date has been built. [136] So, *e.g.*, in the *wasf* poems, the comparison of the neck with a tower "built for an armory"(4, 4) impresses one as a later modification of the comparison of the nose with a Lebanon peak "looking towards Damascus" (7, 5). The sixth chapter comprising songs Nos. XVI and XVII gives special evidence of having been recast. [137] For songs like the second (1, 7-8), furnishing a simple picture of shepherd life, or like the eleventh (4, 8), the invitation of the lover to his beloved:

"Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,"

there are no definite criteria except the test of language, which suggests a later date for the former and a much earlier one for the latter.

Taking all the factors outlined above together, we are perhaps safe in saying that none of the songs take us beyond the eighth century B. C., that, with a few possible exceptions, they are all of post-exilic origin, *i.e.*, later than 539 B. C., that most of them did not receive their final form until the close of the fourth century, and that their redaction into the present anthology is not earlier than 250 B. C.

Bringing the songs down to a comparatively late date must not lead us to conclude that there were no love songs among the Hebrews in earlier days. On the contrary, probably more were produced in pre-

[136] Psalm 18 furnishes an illustration of such a process. Verses 7-16 represent the remains of an old nature poem, descriptive of Yahweh's power as a storm and mountain god. With this older composition as a basis, a Psalm has been evolved that embodies the later and more advanced views of divine government of the Universe by a spiritualized power, with no trace of earlier animistic conceptions.

[137] See the notes to these two songs.

exilic days than after the sixth century B. C., for the simpler the conditions of life, the more favorable for producing folk literature—folk tales and folk poetry; and village and country life in Palestine ran on the whole more smoothly in pre-exilic than in post-exilic days. But folk literature is subject to fashion, and as conditions change new expressions for folk sentiments are found. When this takes place, the older folk poetry is apt to disappear. Oral transmission as the natural means of perpetuating literary compositions that arose among the people would cease. It is not surprising, therefore, that love poems reflecting conditions in post-exilic days should drive older compositions out. We may, however, feel tolerably certain that the *spirit* of the older folk lyrics was much the same as that which we encounter in those of later date. Even the metaphors may have been much the same, and surely the manner of giving expression to love sentiments. The chief modification would be in the references and allusions and naturally in the language, which in folk poetry must keep pace with the prevailing idiom or lose its appeal.

The objection might be urged against the view here set forth that our collection represents on the whole the folk poetry of later date, that we are assuming the production of such poetry at a time when the folk spirit had become too sophisticated or when conditions of life had become too austere to lead to lyrics in which the theme is the pure joy in life. The well of folk song never runs dry. The folk spirit breaks through the conventions of life. More particularly in lands which can look back to many cen-

turies, aye, to milleniums of culture—as is the case in the East—ancient folk customs persist, old folk tales continue to circulate and the folk spirit finds new forms of expression. The great masses in Eastern lands have never become sophisticated and even in Western climes—in Italy, in France, in Germany, in Holland and even in Great Britian—the peasantry are less affected by the currents of modern life than we ordinarily assume. Witness the continuation of customs hoary with age, the persistence of beliefs which to us appear to be superstitions. Folk remedies still play a large part in the treatment of disease among the peasantry of Southern and Eastern Europe and still more so in the East where even the city population retains a good deal of the primitive folk spirit.

We obtain a distorted picture, if we imagine that the Jewish masses in the villages were affected to any large extent by the religious movements of the day which led to the rise of such sects as the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes in the centuries preceding our era, and to the growth of Schools in which the details and subtleties of the canonical laws were discussed by learned Rabbis and their pupils. The Jewish peasantry by virtue of the conservative spirit which is always stronger in villages than in cities, continued, we may be sure, to lead much the same kind of life in post-exilic days as in earlier periods. They were affected, of course, by the political vicissitudes, but not to the extent of undergoing a transformation of character. On the whole, the Persian rule, under which the Jews lived till the coming of the Greeks, was mild and considerate. It created no revolution in the mode of

life among the peasantry of Palestine. Persian governors never attempted any forced Persianization of the populace, such as was undertaken in the second century by the Seleucid rulers who tried to impose Hellenism upon the Jews.

There is, therefore, no reason for questioning that in post-exilic days the folk spirit among the Jews would seek an outlet in such lyrics as we find in the Song of Songs; the lighter sides of life would necessarily assert themselves even in an age that seemed to be absorbed by serious discussions of religious problems. If the Talmud could preserve the notice [138] that in Jerusalem it was customary for the youths and maidens in the evening of the solemn Atonement Day to go out into the fields to sing and dance, we are certainly justified in concluding that in the smaller towns and in the villages, the old folk spirit was strong enough to assert itself in the life of the peasantry.

II

We must not, of course, suppose that all the songs in our collection originated in one place. Place names in some, as for example, Jerusalem, [139] Tirzah, [140] Engedi, Heshbon, David's tower, point to the south as the place of origin, while Lebanon and Amana, Shenir, Carmel, Gilead direct us to the north. These allusions, to be sure, must not be pressed too hard. A reference to so famous a range as the Leba-

[138] See above, p. 36.
[139] Nos. II, V, IX.
[140] No. XVII.

non might occur in a poem produced in any part of Palestine.[141] In the first of the *wasf* poems (4, 1-7, Song No. x) the hair of the beloved is compared to the wool of flocks pasturing in Gilead—because Gilead was famous for its pasturage—while the neck is likened to David's tower in Jerusalem. Life in the villages was much the same, whether situated in the north or in the south. Hence a song that originated in one place might find its way to another. A song like No. xi,

"Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,"

is distinctly of northern origin, just as the reference to the vineyards of Engedi near the Dead Sea in Song No. iv, is sufficient to justify us in assuming that this song belongs to the south.

It adds to the interest and value of our collection thus to find songs from various parts of Palestine included. They reflect conditions and betray a spirit not limited to any particular district; and we may go further and conclude from the absence of anything specifically Hebraic in the thought of the songs, that they are really Palestinian in character. Some of them may have come to the Jews from villages lying outside of the scope of Jewish settlements. They are all the more interesting because they picture general conditions, affecting alike the Jewish and non-Jewish populations of Palestine and Syria, as the sentiments expressed are likewise common to both—because so intensely human.

[141] In No. x (3, 6-11) the "woods of Lebanon" are introduced and a little further on Jerusalem, with a variant Zion.

III

Folk poetry as it thus circulates orally from place to place is subject to modification. Some one may suggest a new line in place of an accepted one. In this way variants will arise, and when editors come along to collect the songs and to give them a final form, the variant line is apt to be embodied in the text. The written form being intended, as we have had occasion to point out, for preservation—not for circulation—and to act as a guide in reading or reciting a production to others—an editor would naturally preserve whatever would be brought to his notice. He would leave it to the one into whose hands the written form would fall, to distinguish what we would call the original text from the variants. There are many specimens of such variants in our anthology; and it is clear that they must be recognized as such and removed from the body of the text in order to secure a satisfactory rendering.

Fortunately, we have in the metrical form of the songs, a safe guide in picking out such variants. Hebrew poetry, as is now recognized by all scholars, is marked by two factors—parallelism and rhythm. The parallelism is either complete, so that in two lines or in two hemistichs of one line, we have a perfect balance between the two thoughts—one being expressed by variations in language—or the parallelism marks a certain progress in the thought—a nuance added to it or a new turn given it. Without entering into details [142] which would carry us too far, we

[142] The English reader has now at his disposal an admirable and trustworthy treatment of the principles of Hebrew poetry, Prof. G. B. Gray's *The*

find in the Song of Songs as in the Psalms, in Job, in parts of Koheleth, in Lamentations, and in the poetical portions of the Prophets and of Proverbs, a steady succession of double lines (or of two hemistichs) that show a correspondence to one another. If now we find an "extra" line without a companion, the suspicion at once arises that we are in the presence of a variant line.

Let me give a few illustrations. In the second song (1, 5-6), as the text stands, we have nine lines—or rather nine half-lines. Applying the principle of parallelism, it is not difficult to discover that of the two half-lines reading:

(a) My mother's sons were incensed against me;

(b) The keeper of the vineyard they made me,

one must be eliminated. The last half-line reads:

"My own vineyard I did not guard,"

i.e., as explained in the notes, the maiden saucily hints that she gave herself willingly to her lover. If we retain the first of the two half-lines, the fact that she did not guard her vineyard (*i.e.*, herself), is the reason why her brothers were incensed against her. If we retain the second half-line, we must take "they" as a general impersonal indication and the two half-lines tells us that though they (her brothers or her family) tried to make a vineyard keeper of her, she did not guard her own vineyard. I prefer the latter and therefore eliminate the former half-line as the variant.

Forms of Hebrew Poetry (London, 1915). Avoiding all fanciful theories, Prof. Gray, whose work is intended for the general reader, tells us what we now know definitely of this very intricate subject.

In the next song (1, 7-8) we have similarly two half-lines of which one must be eliminated,

(a) Where thou feedest
(b) Where thou leadest to rest.

One might use either, but not both without interfering with the metrical arrangement of the poem which, like the second, has eight half-lines.

In Song No. XIV (5, 2-8) we have another instance of two half-lines that at first sight would seem to be parallels and entirely in place:

(a) I sought him but did not find him;
(b) I called him but he did not answer me.

Looking closer, however, we find that if we retain both half-lines, we have an odd hemistich that spoils the otherwise regular metrical arrangement. Since the preceding hemistich to which one of the two in question belongs reads,

"My soul longed for his word,"

I prefer the second half-line,

"I called him but he did not answer me,"

as more appropriate, though the first would also be quite in place. [143]

The removal of such variants gives us a better poetic form, without, as should be added, in any way modifying the original thought of the poem. The departure from the conventional rendering involved ought to be acceptable even to those who are not sympathetic to textual changes in a Biblical book.

[143] See note 12 to Song No. XIV in which I point out that the first of these two hemistichs was transferred from this place to the other "dream" Song No. VIII (3, 1), and according to the Greek version both were so transferred.

Much more numerous are instances of comments and glosses throughout the chapters. The reader who is familiar with earlier volumes of mine need no longer be told that all of the books of the Old Testament without exception, contain comments and glosses in larger or smaller numbers, added by editors or perhaps later commentators by way of explanation, and which have come into the body of the text because of the lack of distinction in an ancient codex—on which I have above dwelt—between what is original and what is supplementary. It was the task of the reader to separate comment and gloss from the text, just as he was left to recognize a variant line or half-line and to make his choice. Besides comments and glosses added to a text, we have also variant single words or a variant phrase, which likewise got into the main body of a text. In many cases it is not easy to decide whether we are dealing with a variant word or phrase or with a comment or gloss, but in all cases we can recognize with reasonable certainty any addition to a text, because of the second principle of Hebrew poetry—rhythm depending upon the regularity of beats to the lines of a poem.

The determination of the varieties of rhythm in Hebrew poetry is a difficult task still confronting scholars, for although much progress has been made in recent years, and the fundamental problems may now be said to have been satisfactorily solved, there is still uncertainty on many points of detail. The earlier investigators of Hebrew poetry generally went astray in attempts to find metres in Hebrew corre-

sponding to those that we find in Greek and Latin poetry. As far back as Philo and Josephus such attempts to find a parallel between Hebrew and Greek poetry appear to have been made; [144] and even at the present time efforts to find a regularity of feet in Hebrew poetry continue to be made, with, however, little prospect of success, because neither rhyme nor absolute regularity of intervals between stressed syllables—which gave us rhythm—appears to have been essential to Hebrew poetry. The rhythm, as just suggested, depends upon the number of stressed syllables in a line. So much is certain; and it would appear that such was the importance attached to this element of stress, that the question as to the number of syllables that might intervene between two stressed syllables was left out of consideration. Naturally there was a limit as to the number of intervening syllables between two stressed ones, but that limit was left to the ear and not fixed by any hard and fast rule. The number of such intervening syllables never exceeded four, but according to the character of the syllables, whether they could be slurred over, as it were, or could not, either because of their phonetic character or because of the part they played in the logic of the sentence, in the thought to be conveyed, the interval between two stressed syllables might vary from two to four—a sufficient leeway to bring about irregularity in the number of actual syllables to a line and thus check the tendency towards a division of the line of a poem into a regular number of feet.

[144] See Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry*, p. 10 *seq.*

In poetry betraying the self-conscious literary artist like the Book of Lamentations or as in the Psalms, there is a greater approach towards regularity in the intervals between stressed syllables than in the remains of the older Hebrew poetry, such as the Song of Deborah (Judges, chap. 5) or in some of the ancient poems embodied in Genesis and in Numbers. [145] Likewise, in the songs in our anthology, there is great irregularity, which incidentally may be regarded as another proof of their folk origin. We must, of course, attune our ears to a recognition of what syllables in a line should receive a stress. Practice, a knowledge of the language and a certain instinct, together with an appreciation of musical cadence, are the chief factors involved in obtaining, as it were, a "feeling" for the peculiarities of Hebrew rhythm, without which one may easily go astray.

There are, as it would appear, four distinct metrical arrangements in the twenty-three songs of which the Songs of Songs consists. The most common is the rhythm resulting from hemistichs with three and two stressed syllables or beats to each line. Fourteen of the songs [146] show this arrangement; five [147] having an equal division of three beats to each hemistich; one [148] an equal division of two beats to each hemistich and three [149] again an inequality of three, two and two beats to each line, which is thus divided

[145] *e. g.*, Gen. 4, 23-24; Num. 10, 35; 21,17-18; 21, 27-30.
[146] Nos. II-V, VII, IX-X, XIV, XVI-XVIII,XX-XXII.
[147] Nos. I, VIII, XII-XIII, XXIII.
[148] No. XV.
[149] Nos. VI, XI and XIX.

into tristichs, instead of hemistichs. Prof. Gray [150] suggests the name of balancing rhythm for lines with hemistichs of equal beats and echoing rhythm for lines of unequal beats.

Let me now apologize to the reader for thus burdening him with technical details, but a general knowledge of these details is essential if he wishes to follow my attempt to purge the text of the twenty-three lyrics from glosses, comments and variant words or phrases.

[150] *ib.*, p. 172. As stated in the Preface my metrical arrangement of the 23 songs agrees in the main with that adopted by Dr. I. H. Rothstein in his valuable investigation *Grundzüge des Hebräischen Rhythmus*, (Leipzig, 1909), which on pp. 97-104 contains the text of the *Song of Songs* metrically arranged.

PART II

SONG OF SONGS
A NEW TRANSLATION
WITH COMMENTS

Song of Songs[1]

I

LOVE'S ECSTACY

3:3[2]

1, 1-4 (*Beloved*) Let me drink [3] the kisses of thy mouth,[4]
For thy love is sweeter than wine.[5]
Thou art [6] as clarified oil;[7]
Therefore do the virgins love thee.[8]
Hasten to take me away;[9]
Bring me, [10] O king, into thy chamber,
There to be glad and be merry with thee;
To be drunk [11] with thy love more than wine. [12]

[1] This as the title of the little book—and for which some Greek codices have "Song of Songs"—points to its being a collection of songs—of pure love lyrics as has been set forth in the introduction. The title is similar to the designation "Book of Songs" (Kitāb al-Aghāni) given by the compiler or compilers to a great collection of Arabic poetry. See Nicholson, *A Literary History of Arabia*, p. 32. I cannot, therefore, agree with Ehrlich (*Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel*, Vol. 7, p. 1) who follows Ewald, Ginsburg, Zapletal and many others,—including earlier Jewish exegetes—in taking the title as conveying the force of "the choicest songs" like the expression 'holy of holies' for 'the holiest.' This superlative estimate was, to be sure, given to the book by Rabbinical opinion (Talmud Babli Yadaim 3, 5), but this was done under the influence of the allegorical application of the passionate love scenes to the relationship between God and Israel. The title is followed by an editorial addition, reading literally "which is to Solomon" and which reflects the later and uncritical tradition ascribing the authorship to King Solomon. This tradition has been fully discussed above, in Chapter II. The introduction of the relative particle ("which") of itself points to the supplementary character of the entire phrase, for in the headings to the Psalms, we find simply "to David," "to Moses," etc. Some later editor, therefore, added "which is to Solomon" to the older designation "A Song of Songs" and paved the way for further misinterpretations by scholars who took the entire present title as a unit.

[2] Each line in the original consists of two hemistichs of three beats each. In the English translation I give throughout a separate line to each hemistich.

[3] The text reads "That he might kiss me" or "let him kiss me" but by a slight change we obtain a reading "let me drink" which besides avoiding an awkward tautology, accords with the comparison of love with wine.

[4] So read by a slight change, demanded by the context, instead of "his mouth."

[5] The Greek text reads here as well as in v. 4 and 4, 10 (twice) and 7, 13 "thy breasts" (*daddēkha*) instead of "thy love" (*dōdēkha*), which is possible by a different vocalization of the consonantal framework. Geiger and other scholars prefer this reading, but as Ehrlich points out, apart from the somewhat coarse comparison, the word *dad* designates in Hebrew

the female breast only, whereas for the male breast a different word (*hazeḳ*) is used. In our passage it is the beloved who addresses her lover. The underlying stem, however, of both "breast" and "love" is the same.

[6] Literally "thy name," but "name" in Hebrew as in other Semitic languages is used for one's essence or being.

[7] The translation "clarified" rests upon a slight textual change, accepted by Rothstein, *Grundzüge des Hebräischen Rhythmus*, p. 351.

The words at the beginning of v. 3:

"(to) the fragrance of thy good oils,"

for which the Greek text has "and the fragrance of thy oils," are clearly a comment to the words "thy love is sweeter than wine," which some commentator took over from 4, 10, where the reading is

"The fragrance of thy oils is above all spices."

The Greek text, (v. 3,) gives the passage from 4, 10 in full—showing that it is a quotation. The addition of "to" may be taken in the sense of "referring to." It is also possible, though less probable, that the quotation was intended as a comment to "thy name is clarified oil." In any case the words are not in place here and spoil the poem.

[8] All the girls are in love with her lover—an admission on the part of the passionate maiden, which enhances the consciousness of her own charms, so superior as to be able to attract the exclusive attentions of the popular idol.

[9] Literally: "Draw me after thee, let us hasten," but to be combined into a single utterance.

[10] So read (as an imperative) by a different vocalization, instead of "the king has brought me." The change in the construction may have been intentionally made in order to support the identification of the king with Solomon. The imperative form of the verb carrying with it the address to the lover, designated by the maiden as "king" (see above, p. 118) is adopted by Budde, Ehrlich and others. This reading disposes at one blow of all the fanciful theories of a supposed abduction of a rustic maiden to a royal harem, just as the application of the word "king" to the lover disposes of the identification with Solomon or with any other real king.

[11] So by a slight change proposed by Grätz and adopted in a modified form by Budde, *Das Hohe Lied*, p. 1, instead of "we will recall" which is very wooden.

[12] The love of her swain being "better than wine" as she has said, the maiden naturally longs to drink that love to the full—to be drunk with love in her ecstasy. An addition, which gives us two additional beats:

"rightly they love thee,"

is clearly a comment to the close of v. 3.

"Therefore do the virgins love thee,"

to point out that "therefore" (*al-kēn*) means "justly, rightly."

II

THE SAUCY MAIDEN

3; 2[1]

1, 5-6. (*Maiden*) Swarthy am I, but comely,
O maidens of Jerusalem,
(Swarthy)[2] as the tents of Kedar,[3]
As Solomonic hangings. [4]
Heed not that I am swarthy,
That the sun has scorched me.
The keeper of the vineyards they made me; [5]
But my own vineyard I did not keep.[6]

[1] Each line consists of two hemistichs of three and two beats, respectively.

[2] Unless we are to regard these two lines as an insertion, taken over perhaps, from some other song, we must repeat "swarthy" (or some similar expression) in order to get the required three beats for this hemistich.

[3] Kedar, the name of a Bedouin tribe of northern Arabia, becomes in the Old Testament (*e.g.*, Gen. 25, 13; Ps. 120, 5; Is. 21, 17) a generic term for the Bedouins whose tents are ordinarily woven of goats' skins and are of a very deep brown color—almost black. See Haupt's note on p. 30 of his *Book of Canticles*.

[4] Not "tent curtains," as is ordinarily rendered, but the rich tapestries hung on the walls of oriental mansions. Solomon being the symbol of royal splendor, "the hangings of Solomon" is clearly to be taken as an expression of costly and beautiful interior decorations—regal hangings, as it were. "Tents" and "hangings" side by side occur again in Habakkuk 3, 7.

[5] That is the reason why she is sunburnt. The reference is to the guarding of the vineyards during harvest time. A superfluous line of three beats, reading:

"My mother's sons were incensed against me,"

is probably a variant, substituted with a view of obscuring the erotic allusion to the maiden's neglect of her chastity (see the following note).

[6] The Hebrew text contains an overlapping "mine," added by some one who thought that the line ought to have three beats. The maiden's 'vineyard' is her body. In a saucy manner she hints that she gave herself freely to her lover, though it may have been only a little flirtation. With the young men swarming about her during harvest time, she paid little heed to the task imposed upon her. The metaphor of the vineyard is again introduced, 8, 12 ("my vineyard is my own") and 7, 13, as well as in the little snatch from some song, introduced 2, 15, where the foxes who destroy the vineyards are the young men who associate with the maidens during harvest time.

III

LOVE'S LONGING

3; 2[1]

1, 7-8 (*Beloved*) O tell me, beloved of my soul,
Where thou feedest; [2]
For why should I roam about,[3]
Among the flocks of thy comrades.
(*Lover*) If thou knowest not,
Fairest of women!
Follow the tracks of the flock,[4]
By the tents of the shepherds.

[1] A dialogue between a shepherd and shepherdess with hemistichs of three and two beats.

[2] *i.e.*, thy flock. A variant hemistich—or a comment—reads: "Where thou leadest to rest" to which some one added "at noon" to suggest that the siesta at the middle of the day is an appropriate time for a meeting with the lover.

[3] By an inversion of the consonantal framework one obtains the meaning "wander about as though lost," which is far more satisfying than "one veiled." See Daniel 1, 10 where the same word in the sense of "lest" occurs in a phrase which suggests that instead of "why," we might render "lest I roam about," as a gentle hint to the lover that he may lose his prize, if he fails to send word where he is.

[4] Be guided by the footprints of the flock and you will soon reach the right place. A commentator adds:

"And pasture thy kids,"

to indicate that the maiden should come with her flock. It is also possible that this is a variant hemistich, in which case the "kid" would be an erotic allusion. A kid is the symbolical gift given to a harlot, *e.g.*, Gen. 38, 17. See Haupt, *Book of Canticles*, p. 52. for other examples.

IV

THE DELIGHTS OF LOVE

3; 2[1]

1, 9-17 (*Lover*) To a steed [2] of Pharaoh's chariots
I compare thee, my darling.[3]
10 Thy cheeks are comely (as) with trappings;[4]
Thy neck with strings of beads.
Golden bangles [5] we will make for thee,
With studs of silver.
(*Beloved*) As long as the king [6] was on his couch,[7]
His nard [8] sent forth its fragrance.
A bunch of myrrh [9] is my love,
Lying between my breasts.[10]
A cluster of henna [11] is my love,
From the vineyards of Engedi.[12]
15 (*Lover*) Ah, thou art fair, my darling;
Ah, thou art fair.[13]
(*Beloved*) Ah, thou art fair, my love;
Ah,[14] thou art sweet.
(*Lover and Beloved*) The beams of our house [15] are cedars;
Our rafters cypresses.[16]

[1] Another dialogue between lover and beloved, with hemistichs of three and two beats.

[2] Literally "mare," the form used being the feminine singular with an "archaic" connecting vowel, as is occasionally found in poetical passages. I choose 'steed' (so RV) as a more poetic word, though even with this modification the comparison of one's darling with a war horse does not appeal to our Western sense of poetry. The horse in the Orient has at all times been regarded as the noble animal. Arabic poetry is full of superb descriptions of the beauty and majesty of the horse; and the comparison of the beloved with a horse actually occurs (Jacob, *Das Hohe Lied*, p. 33), as in our passage. One may recall also the splendid description of the horse in Job 39, 19-25 and in Horace, Ode III, 2. The horse, it must be borne in mind, is never used as a beast of burden in the Orient, the ass being employed instead, but solely as a riding animal for war or in the chase. To compare one's beloved, therefore, to a mare of the royal stables is to sing the praises of her beauty in a major key.

[3] More literally "my friend" which occurs in the feminine form as a term of great endearment only in the Song of Songs—nine times in all—just as the corresponding term of "my love" (*dôdî*, *dôd*, etc.) used by the beloved is limited to this book (occurring 25 times), except for Is. 5, 1 which is based on a love song.

[4] Such is the meaning of the term demanded by the context. The only other occurrence of the word is in v. 11 of this song where "bangles" appears to be meant. The basis of the comparison is the beloved covered with ornaments that hang over her face and cover her head and neck. She is decked out as elaborately as a royal steed with splendid and costly trappings.

[5] See the previous note. The reference appears to be, as Haupt has suggested (*Book of Canticles*, p. 31) to the gold discs with which the crown of the bride is ornamented, and to which (as also to the bridal veil) little silver bells are attached.

[6] Again the designation of the lover or the bridegroom, as above v. 4.

[7] Not "table," but the couch on which one reclines at meals, or, as in our passage, the bridal couch.

[8] So read by a slight change instead of "my nard." While "spikenard," as is ordinarily translated, is not impossible, if we bring the composition of this song down to a period where com-

mercial interchange with the distant East is common,—for spikenard is a product of the Kashmir district in India—it is better to translate nard and assume an ointment made of native aromatic grasses (*andropogon nardus*). My friend, Mr. W. H. Schoff, calls my attention to two passages in Horace where nard of Assyria and Persia is mentioned (Odes II, 11, III, 1).

[9] The myrrh frequently mentioned in the Old Testament is the gum resin (*balsamodendron myrrha*) from Southern Arabia or from the adjacent coast of Africa, used as a perfume as well as for medicinal purposes.

[10] The lover is so sweet that the maiden needs no perfume. He is nard, myrrh and henna. See the still more elaborate combination of sweet smelling spices and fruits in 4, 13. The Oriental love of fragrant perfumes finds an illustration in these and other passages in the Song of Songs.

[11] Henna (*lawsonia alba*), which grows in clusters like grapes, is a very sweet flower, native in Palestine. The powdered leaves are used as a stain for the nails, skin, hair, etc.

[12] The vineyards of Engedi (near the Dead Sea) were famed for their choice grapes. See Pliny's description, *Hist. Nat.* XII, 14 and 24.

[13] Some commentator, to call attention to the parallel 4, 1, adds

"Thy eyes are doves."

The addition is clearly out of place in our song and spoils the rhythm.

[14] So read, following Rothstein, *Grundzüge des Hebräischen Rhythmus*, p. 98 instead of "yea" which has slipped in (by accidental repetition) from the following phrase.

[15] Ehrlich (*Randglossen*, Vol. 7, p. 5) points out that in later usage "beam of our houses," (as the text reads) is the plural of "beam of our house," *i.e.*, therefore, "beams of our house."

[16] These two lines reveal the open air as the meeting place of the lovers where they spend the night, in enjoyment of the delights of love, with the trees as their shelter. A commentator, to make clearer what is meant, added, "Aye, our couch is green," or "leafy;" and this comment slipped in at the end of v. 16.

V

LOVE'S CONSUMMATION

3; 2 [1]

2, 1-7 (*Beloved*) The saffron [2] of the plain [3] am I;
The lily [4] of the valleys.
(*Lover*) As the lily among thistles,[5]
So is my darling among maidens.
(*Beloved*) As the apple [6] among the trees of the forest,
So is my love among youths.
In his shadow I love [7] to dwell
And his fruit is sweet to me.[8]
Bring me to the house of wine,[9]
And serve me [10] with love.
Stay me with raisins;[11]
Refresh me with apples.
His left arm caressing [12] my head;
His right one embracing me.
Refrain: O maidens of Jerusalem, I charge you,
By the gazelles and hinds of the field,
Arouse ye not and disturb not,
Until love is satiated. [13]

[1] A third song in dialogue between beloved and lover; and again with hemistichs of three and two beats.

[2] The term used and commonly rendered "rose" is a designation for the *colchicum autumnale* as Löw, *Aramäische Pflanzennamen*, No. 128, points out. Its flowers, appearing in the autumn, are of a pale lilac color.

[3] The word in the text *sharon* means "plain," and because of this becomes the designation of the plain south of Mt. Carmel. The Greek version takes it correctly as a common noun, and not as our English translations do, as a proper name. The parallelism with "valleys" confirms the Greek rendering.

[4] The *gladiolus atropurpureus*—"a large and beautiful dark purple sword-lily" (Haupt, *Book of Canticles*," p. 29). The two lines are not to be taken as self-praise on the part of the beloved, but on the contrary as an expression of a modest estimate, for the saffron and lily are simple and modest flowers. It is as though she said "I am only a simple violet." It is the bridegroom who, taking up the bride's all too modest characterization of herself, changes the description into a graceful compliment by contrasting the lily with the thistle.

[5] *Cnicus syriacus* "thistle," not "thorn" as is commonly rendered.

[6] The apple (again v. 5) is a symbol of love as among the Greeks. Theocritus mentions it frequently; and we also encounter the comparison of the pleasures of love with apples (and other plucked fruits) in Arabic and Persian poetry. See Jacob, *Das Hohe Lied*, pp. 6-8. See also the significant reference to the apple tree under which love is born in 8, 5 (Song No. XXI of our collection.)

[7] So read—following the Greek text—by a different vocalization of the verb.

[8] The line as it stands is a little too long for a hemistich of two beats. If we read "to me" by an omission of two letters instead of "to my taste" we reduce the line to its proper length.

[9] Read the verb as an imperative by a change in the vocalization. So the Greek version. The "house of wine" is not the tavern, which would be banal—particularly in the ancient Orient where the taverns were the brothels—but the bridal chamber. The wine is the symbol of sensual joy, just as the vineyard (above, Song No. II, Note 6). "Thy love is sweeter than wine" says the ecstatic maiden (1, 2). In Müller, *Liebespoesie der Alten Aegypter*, Nos. 5 and 12, love is spoken of as "full of wine."

[10] The verb in the text is to be vocalized as an imperative (*digelu*) and not as a noun with a suffix of the third person. The usual rendering "his flag" or "his sign" is, therefore, to be abandoned. The rendering "serve me" is based on the use of the equivalent verb *dāgalu* in Assyrian.

[11] Cakes made of sweet raisins are meant. The raisin is again, because of its sweetness, an erotic symbol, like the apple in the following line, to suggest that the love-sick maiden can be rescued from her languishing condition only by the caresses and embraces of her lover. A commentator, therefore, adds:

"For I am sick of love"

which he took over bodily as appropriate here from 5, 8. There is only one cure for such a disease—the one set forth so naively in the following two lines.

[12] So by a different division of the two words in the Hebrew text, instead of "under my head." See Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, Vol. 7, p. 6, for the justification of this reading, also followed by Bruston.

[13] This refrain—for such it appears to be—is introduced by the editor at several points—here and 3, 5 and 8, 4. In the latter passage we have also the two previous lines

"His left arm caressing my head;
His right one embracing me,"

taken over from our song.

Consisting as it does of hemistichs of three beats each, it is clear that the stanza does not belong to our little song. It is more in place in 3, 5 where it comes at the close of a song consisting of hemistichs of three beats each.

VI

SPRINGTIDE OF LOVE

3; 2; 2[1]

2, 8-14 (*Beloved*) Hark![2] my love is coming,
Leaping over mountains;
Bounding over hillocks.[3]
Behold him[4] behind our wall,[5]
Looking through windows;
Peering through lattices.
My love began to speak unto me:
(*Lover*) Rise up, my darling;
My fair one, come away.
For, lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over;
The cold (?)[6] is gone.
The ground is covered with blossoms;[7]
The time of pruning has come;[8]
And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard.[9]
The figtree is ripening her figs;
And the vines are in blossom,
Giving forth their fragrance.[10]
Rise up my darling,[11] my dove,
In the clefts of the rock,
In the cliff's recesses,
Show me thy face, let me hear (thee);[12]
For sweet is thy voice,
And comely thy face.

[1] Each line consists of tristichs with three, two and two beats. The title for this song was suggested by Haupt (*Book of Canticles*, p. 14). The association of spring and love as in Tennyson's famous line:

"In the Spring, the young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love,"

which may, indeed, have been suggested to the English poet—strongly influenced by Biblical poetry as he was—by our little song.

[2] The text has "voice," but since even in poetry a voice can hardly be said to be coming, leaping, etc., the word has clearly the force of our "hark." There is no occasion to omit the word because of the rhythm, as Rothstein proposes.

[3] The text has an additional distich:

"My lover is like a gazelle,
Or like a young fawn."

which is clearly inserted here from 2, 17, because it seemed appropriate, just as it appears again at the close of the book (8, 14). Such insertions appear to be due to the same editor whom we encountered above (Song No. v, note 13), bent upon stringing the songs together into some kind of unity.

[4] The Greek version omits the word "standing" which was added as a comment, and makes the line too long.

[5] The word used is an Aramaic term for wall.

[6] A word like *karah*, "cold," forming a synonym to "winter" or "rain" has dropped out, or perhaps the word "over" was repeated, so that the line read,

["Over and] gone."

[7] The word occurs in this passage only.

[8] The older translation:

"The time of singing has come"

has been quite generally abandoned by modern scholars. As Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, Vol. 7, p. 7, points out, derivatives from the stem *zāmar* in the sense of "singing" are used for ritual songs only, *e.g.*, Ex. 15, 2; Lev. 25, 3-4; Is. 5, 6, whereas for a secular song *shir*, as in the title of our "Song of Songs," is used.

[9] A commentator added, "In our land" which gives us a superfluous beat.

[10] Fig and vine are both erotic symbols. The fig leaf suggests the female organ, and this association leads to the use of the fig leaf as a convention in art.

[11] Some commentator added from the 10th verse "my fair one, come away," which makes the line entirely too long.

[12] Required by the English idiom, but not needed in the Hebrew.

VII

THE FOXES IN THE VINEYARDS

3; 2[1]

2, 15 (*Maidens*) Catch us, the foxes, [2]
The little foxes,
Spoiling the vineyards;
For our vineyards are in bloom. [3]

[1] Consisting of four hemistichs of three and two beats alternately. While the love songs of the Arabs and Palestinians are generally short and we have some consisting of four lines only (*e.g.*, Dalman, *Palästinischer Diwan* pp. 209 and 218), yet this couplet impresses one as a snatch of a song, rather than an entire little song. If this be correct, it has been inserted here by some editor together with verses 16-17 which are clearly refrains. The symbolism is transparent. The foxes are the young men, while the vineyards are the maidens, only too anxious to have the foxes caught in order to attack "our vineyards in bloom." The song expresses the longing of the maidens in whose mouths the song is placed.

[2] The word used (*shu'āl*, identical with our "jackal") designates in the Old Testament either the fox or the jackal, in our passage probably the former, though jackals also prowl about vineyards and do much harm. In Judges 15, 4, the story of Samson catching 300 *shu'ālīm*—jackals are meant, rather than foxes. See Post's article in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible sub* "Fox."

[3] The maidens refer to their charms as "our vineyards." Cf. above 2, 13 "the vines in bloom" and again 6, 11 and 7, 13. Verses 16-17 reading:

(a) My love is mine and I am his,
Who feeds among lilies.
(b) Until the morning blows,
And the shadows flee;
Be like a gazelle, my love,
Or like a young fawn,

are two refrains, each independent of the other and neither having any connection with either the 6th or 7th song or with the following one. The first refrain is taken over from 6, 3; the second one is a combination of 2, 9[a], and 4, 6. See further the commentary to the latter passage (Note 18 in Song No. x) for the explanation of the words "on the mountains of Bether" added to our passage, which is an error for "mountains of myrrh," and for which at the close of the collection, 8, 14, we have "mountains of spices." This closing verse of the collection is taken over from our passage. To the third hemistich of the second refrain, a commentator has added "turn about" (for which 8, 14 we have "flee") as the explanation of the appeal to the lover to be like a young gazelle or a young fawn, *i.e.*, to turn about and flee like a gazelle or a young fawn. The addition gives us a superfluous beat.

VIII

LOVE'S DREAM

3; 3[1]

3, 1-4 (*Beloved*) By night as I lay on [my] bed,
I sought [2] the beloved of my soul.
[I sought him, but could not find him;
I called him but he did not answer me.] [3]
Let me rise and go about the city;
Let me seek the beloved of my soul. [4]
The watchmen who go about the city found me.
"Have ye seen the beloved of my soul?"
Scarce had I passed from them,
When I found the beloved of my soul,
I held him and would not let him go,
Until I had brought him to the house of
my mother. [5]

[1] A song of the beloved, recounting a dream. Each line consists of hemistichs of three beats each.

[2] To be taken in the sense of "to long for," as Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, Vol. 7, p. 8, points out.

[3] The same editor (or one of like intent) who added the refrains above referred to, (Song No. VII, note 3) is also to be detected in this song, taking over from a companion song to ours (5, 2-8) the hemistich:

"I sought him but could not find him," (5, 6.)

and inserting it as an appropriate refrain in two places in our song at the end of the first and of the second couplet. The insertion is indicated by the isolated character of the hemistich which lacks the corresponding half-line. The Greek version felt this and therefore added (from 5, 6),

"I called him but he did not answer me"

at the end of the first verse, but not at the end of the second. I retain the insertion—marking it as such—because of its appropriateness after the first verse, but I strike out the repetition at the end of the second verse, because it is less fitting there.

[4] All this happens in the dream. A prosaic commentator adds to "city,"

"in the streets and in the plazas,"

i.e., everywhere. The term used for street (*shûk*) meaning "narrow" is the one still in use in Arabic-speaking countries and is applied to the "bazaar" (*sûk*) because the shops are in the narrow streets.

[5] A variant reading:

"to the chamber of her who bore me."

was transferred—as commonly happened—from the margin (or between the lines) where it belongs, to the body of the text. Our editor bent upon connecting the songs adds the refrain from 2, 6 (see above, Song No. V.)

O maidens of Jerusalem, I charge you,
By the gazelles and hinds of the field,
Arouse not and disturb not,
Until love is satiated.

It clearly has no place at the end of our song, since all that it describes occurs in a dream, whereas the refrain implies a genuine meeting of the lovers, not a fancied one.

IX

THE BRIDAL PROCESSION

3; 2[1]

3, 6-11 Who is this [2] coming up from the meadows [3]
Like a dense cloud [4] of smoke?
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense; [5]
With the powders [6] of the merchant.
Three score warriors [7] about her, [8]
Of the warriors of Israel.
All armed with swords;
In warfare trained.
Each with his sword upon his thigh,
Against danger at night. [9]
The king [10] has made him a conveyance, [11]
Of the woods of the Lebanon. [12]
10 Its supports [13] he has made of silver;
Its seat [14] of gold.
Its body [15] of purple within,
Inlaid with ebony. [16]
Go forth and gaze on the king, [17]
On the day of his nuptials. [18]
With the crown with which his mother crowned him, [19]
On the day of the gladness of his heart.

[1] This song, consisting of ten lines, with hemistichs of three and two beats, is clearly intended for the wedding ceremony, the main feature of which consists of a procession, in which the bride is carried in a litter to the home of the bridegroom.

[2] The feminine is used, showing that the bride is meant. There is no need to change "who" to "what" as Rothstein, *Grundzüge*, p. 367, proposes.

[3] The term used is the common one for "wilderness," but means literally "the place to which the flock is led," that is, the pasturing place. Because in many parts of Palestine the wilderness—often affording excellent pasturage—is close to pastoral settlements, the word acquired the force of 'wilderness,' The procession forms outside of the settlement and moves across the meadows.

[4] The text has "clouds," but the plural is a so-called *pluralis majestatis* in the sense of a "dense cloud" just as "rivers" in Ps. 137, 1, means "the great river," *i.e.*, the Euphrates. The phrase occurs again, Joel 3, 3, (2, 30 in Authorized Version) with an allusion to the "pillar of cloud," Ex. 13, 21-22. The bride riding in a litter, with fragrant spices of all kinds burned in her honor as the procession moves along, is pictured as enveloped in the thick smoke thus produced. The picture is intentionally exaggerated so as to convey the idea of the "royal" grandeur of the occasion. The greater the display, the greater the distinction for the bride. Thus at the present time the bridal procession is still a feature of weddings among the natives of Palestine, as well as in Egypt and Syria. The friends of the bridegroom take part in the procession. As many as possible come with their swords; they sing and dance, brandishing their swords as the procession moves. See Dalman, *Palästinischer Diwan*, p. 193; and also the interesting description of an elaborate bridal procession with a large escort bearing musical instruments and weapons in the days of the Maccabees (I Macc. 9, 36-41).

[5] Frankincense—*lebonah* "white" so called from its color—is likewise an aromatic gum resin obtained from balsamic plants—especially *Boswellia Cartesi*—in Southern Arabia and on the adjacent African coast. The Latin name *olibanum* is derived from the Semitic designation.

[6] Literally "dust" which, as a poetic word, is here used for powdered spices. The text has an additional "all" which, however, makes the hemistich too long.

[7] Sixty—the large unit in Babylonia and Assyria—is here used to indicate a very large number. Similarly in 6, 8, the numbers 60 and 80.

[8] *i.e.*, about the bride's litter. At the beginning of this line, the text reads:

"Behold his litter which is Solomon's."

These words fall entirely out of the metre, and besides, convey the erroneous idea that the one carried in procession is the bridegroom. They represent a gloss and a supergloss. Separating the phrase into its two component parts, the first part "Behold his litter" is a misplaced explanatory gloss to the foreign word *appiryôn*, (Greek *phoreion*, see note 11) "conveyance" at the beginning of v. 9. To the gloss some one added a supergloss "which is Solomon's," reflecting the tradition that regarded this bridal procession as a royal wedding ceremony, carrying a queen for the king's harem.

[9] Here we have the elaborate description of a bridal procession, represented with Oriental hyperbole as though the bride were surrounded by a great troop of warriors. The reference to the "danger at night" is to attacks upon an army or a caravan for which the night is preferably selected.

[10] *i.e.*, again the bridegroom, described by this grandiose title in keeping with the "royal" splendor of the procession. Under the influence of the Solomonic tradition, a commentator added "Solomon," as though this king *par excellence* were meant here as well as further on in the 11th verse. The fact that the line is made too long by this insertion confirms the view that the name is a late addition.

[11] The word in the text is *appiryôn* a corruption of the Greek word *phoreion*, which the Greek version uses. The word occurs also in the Mishnah (Sôtāh IX, 14) for the bride's litter. See further, Marcus Jastrow *Talmudic Dictionary*, s.v., and the note in Haupt *Book of Canticles*, p. 23. To explain this foreign word, a gloss was added "that is, his litter"—giving the Hebrew term (*mittâh*)—which was inserted into the text at a wrong place, as pointed out above, note 8. The failure to recognize the gloss has misled modern commentators to the view that the conveyance or litter was for the bridegroom. This is clearly wrong; and we have no indication that the bridegroom was ever carried in procession as part of the wedding festivities in the ancient or in

the modern Orient. The bridegroom goes out to meet the bride and brings her in triumph to his home, or he awaits her at the threshold of his house; the litter is ordered by him for his bride. In that sense it is "his litter," made for him but for the use of his bride. To show his intense love and to do honor to the bride he has a very costly and luxurious conveyance prepared, though here we must again bear in mind that the description is exaggerated to a superlative degree as in the case of the description of the escort to the bridal procession. The *appiryôn* is made of the most costly wood, inlaid with silver, gold, and ebony—fit for a queen as the bride is regarded. It adds to the distinction thus to introduce a foreign word.

[12] Cedar and cypress.

[13] Literally "columns" supporting the top of the conveyance.

[14] The noun used is from a stem to "stretch out" and appears to indicate not the "top" or the "railing" as has been supposed, but the "seat" on which the bride lies stretched out.

[15] The word ("that in which one rides") is ordinarily applied to the "chariot," but here is used for the body of the *appiryôn*, *i.e.*, the framework for the supports and for the seat, which is of purple—the color of royalty.

[16] The text as it stands "love from the daughters of Jerusalem" is nonsensical, corrupted from an original *hābanim* (cf. Ezek. 27, 15) which is our word "ebony." This correction originally proposed by Graetz (*Das Salomonische Hohelied*, p. 103) has been accepted by Martineau, Siegfried, Cheyne, Haupt and others. When the word became corrupted by a confusion of the letters into "love from the daughters," some one added "Jerusalem," because of the refrain beginning "daughters of Jerusalem;" and this led to a variant "daughters of Zion" (omitted in the Greek version) which got into the next line of the text.

[17] Again the "bridegroom" is meant and again a commentator added "Solomon" as in v. 9 (note 11). The hemistich would have four beats instead of three with "Solomon" added. For the addition "daughters of Zion" which would give us two superfluous beats see the preceding note.

[18] This hemistich has slipped into the text in the wrong place. I follow Rothstein *Grundzüge*, p. 99, and note on p. 368, in restoring it to its proper position as the hemistich of two beats, required to complete the first hemistich of three beats.

By this slight transposition we get two perfect lines with an appropriate parallelism.

[19] As Haupt (*Book of Canticles*, p. 25) points out, it was customary for the bridegroom as well as for the bride to wear a wedding crown. Is. 61, 10 alludes to this custom, and we have an interesting statement in the Mishnah (Sôtāh IX, 14) that during the depressing period of Hadrian's rule, the custom was abandoned as well as the carrying of the bride in an *appiryôn*.

X

THE BEAUTY OF THE BELOVED

3; 2 [1]

4, 1-7 (*Lover*) Ah, thou art fair, my darling;
Ah, thou art fair.
[Ah] [2] thy eyes are doves, [3]
Behind thy veil. [4]
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That trail from Gilead. [5]
Thy teeth are like a flock ready for shearing, [6]
That have come up from the washing.
Thy lips are like a scarlet thread, [7]
And thy mouth [8] is comely.
Thy temple is like a slice of pomegranate, [9]
Behind thy veil;
Thy neck like the tower of David, [10]
Built for an armory, [11]
With a thousand shields upon it, [12]
All shields of warriors. [13]
5 Thy breasts [14] are like two fawns,
Twins of a gazelle.
Thou art all fair, my darling,
And there is no spot [15] in thee.
6 Until the morning blows, [16]
And the shadows [17] flee,
I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
And to the hillock of frankincense. [18]

[1] Again a song of ten lines with hemistichs of three and two beats to each line. The song is a specimen of the *wasf* poetry—(see above, p. 131)—descriptive of the charms of the beloved or of the lover, which forms an ingredient of the lyric poetry among the Arabs. We have three other *wasf* specimens in our collection, (a) 6, 4-7, (b) 7, 2-8— both descriptions of the beloved—and (c) 5, 10-16 in which the beauty of the lover is set forth at length. It is quite natural to find lines or parts of lines in one of these poems repeated in one of the others. So, *e.g.*,

4, 1^{c} = 5, 12^{a}
4, 1^{d-e} = 6, 5^{c-d}
4, 2 = 6, 6
4, 3^{c-d} = 6, 7
4, 4^{a} = 7, 5^{a}
4, 5^{a-b} = 7, 4

[2] The word or some similar one needs to be supplied in order to complete the hemistich to three beats.

[3] We must render literally "Thy eyes are doves" (not "as those of a dove") as Dussaud, *Cantique des Cantiques*, p. 27, has shown. The comparison is not limited to the softness of the dove's eyes, but to the beauty of the dove as a whole.

[4] One of the few references to "veiling" in the Old Testament—a custom which never became general among the present population in Palestine—either among Hebrews or among Arabs.

[5] The Greek text is right in omitting "mount" (as is done in 6, 5, the parallel passage) for the addition makes the hemistich too long. The comparison is to the long-haired goats pasturing in flocks on the side of the mountain, and whose shaggy wool suggests the tresses of the beloved, hanging loose over her back.

[6] The term used is literally "the sheared ones," but as Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, Vol. 7, p. 9, shows, the meaning is "those ready to be sheared." The comparison is between the white teeth of the maiden and the white fleece of the sheep after they have been washed. Shorn sheep would not be white and certainly not beautiful. A commentator, taking the term "sheared" literally, and wishing to suggest that the comparison is with the perfect condition of the sheep, adds as a comment,

"All of them bearing twins and none among them barren,"

which may be a quotation from some other song. To explain the "twins" as referring to the two rows of teeth and "none barren" to the fact that the maiden has all her teeth—so Haupt, Zapletal and others—is unpoetic as well as somewhat forced.

[7] A charming picture suggested by the thin red lips.

[8] The text has a poetic term for mouth—"that with which one speaks."

[9] The pomegranate (*rimmon*; modern Arabic *rummān*) is the *Punica Granatum*; it was extensively cultivated and highly prized. See the article by Post in Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, *s.v.*, for numerous references to the pomegranate in the Old Testament. The comparison here seems to be with the fine delicate rind.

[10] The Orientals regard a large massive neck as a sign of great beauty. Similarly a large nose was a mark of beauty. See the note to 7, 5 (Song No. XVIII).

[11] An obscure word occurring here only and which the Greek translators did not understand and therefore contented themselves with transliterating it *thalpioth*. The context points to "armory" as the AV renders. "Turrets" favored by the RV and many modern commentators seems a less happy guess.

[12] Omit the word "hung" which is a comment that makes the hemistich too long. According to Ez. 27, 11, shields were hung on the walls of a city, clearly on the inside; and since the tower was a part of the wall, the hanging of the shields on the tower would mean practically the same thing. Our poet, availing himself of the poet's license of extravagant praise, suggests that his darling's neck was large enough to accommodate a thousand shields.

[13] *i.e.*, all large shields at that—an interpretation that seems preferable to "all the shields of the warriors" as though the tower accomodated the *entire* military equipment.

[14] Omit "two" which is a superfluous addition by some commentator and makes the hemistich too long. The gazelle is the "beautiful" animal *par excellence*, as the Hebrew (and also Arabic) term for gazelle implies. The gazelle is also the passionate animal, as indicated in the refrain "By the gazelles, etc." See Song No. v. Large breasts are likewise favored in the Orient, as in general the Orientals prefer their women to be of massive proportions; and female fashions follow the masculine whim. Some commentator with poor taste has add-

ed after "twins of a gazelle" the words "who feed among lilies" which, besides adding nothing to the beauty of the picture, presents an isolated hemistich of two beats. In the parallel passage (7, 4), the addition which was suggested by 6, 5, (also added 2, 16) is not found.

[15] *i.e.*, she is without blemish or fault. In 6, 9 the lover calls his beloved "my perfection." With Rothstein *Grundzüge*, p. 101, I invert the order of verses 6 and 7. The proper place for the passionate exclamation of the lover that he will spend the night with his darling and stay until morning is at the end of the song.

[16] Literally "until the day blows." The "day" is here used for "morning" and the reference is to the sea breeze which begins to blow regularly in Palestine a few hours after sunrise. The view that the lines refer to the evening breeze (which is a land breeze) and to the evening shadows is erroneous and misses the point. The lover wants to spend the night—not the day—with the object of his passion. The same thought as in our passage is expressed, Prov. 7, 18,

> "Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning,
> Let us be merry with love."

[17] *i.e.*, the shadows of the night disappear.

[18] Myrrh and frankincense are erotic symbols. See the notes to 1, 13 (Song No. IV) and 3, 6 (Song No. IX). The "mountain of myrrh" as the "hillock of frankincense" (and for which we have "mountains of spices" in 8, 14) is a metaphor for the bodily charms of the beloved. Cf. the term *mons veneris* for a part of the female organ. In 2, 17 (Song No. VII) the text is corrupt and we must read, as in our passage, *har ham-môr* "mountain of myrrh" for the meaningless *hārē bether*. The change involved in the consonantal text is a slight one. Besides, the two words represent an addition to the refrain in 2, 17 and are probably taken over from our passage to indicate the place to which the gazelle is to flee.

XI

COME AND BE MY BRIDE

3; 2; 2[1]

4, 8 (*Lover*) Come with me from Lebanon, my bride;
Come with me from Lebanon, [2]
From the dens of the lions. [3]
Descend from the top of Amana, [4]
From the top of Shenir, [5]
From the mountains of the leopards. [6]

[1] Perhaps a north Palestinian love song in view of the references to northern scenery. The lines consist of three sections (as above in No. VIII and below No. XIX) with three, two and two beats respectively.

[2] The text in both lines reads "with me from Lebanon" to which some prosaic commentator adds "come," which gives us a superfluous beat.

[3] This part of the line (two beats) must be transferred from its present position in the text, as Rothstein *Grundzüge*, p. 100, has seen. In this way we obtain a perfect balance and parallelism in each of the two long lines.

[4] A peak of the Anti-Lebanon at which the river Amana (variant reading Abana) mentioned II Kgs. 5, 12 as a river flowing by Damascus, arises. The modern name of the Amana is Barada ("cold" river.)

[5] Shenir, as the interesting note, Deut. 3, 9, informs us, is the Amoritic name for Hermon, which the Sidonians (*i.e.*, the coast population) call Sirion—clearly an inversion of Senir. The latter as a variant reading to Shenir is vouched for by the Massoretic note to our text. This identity of Shenir (or Senir) and Hermon has been noted by a commentator who added "Hermon," which then came into the text.

[6] Leopards are still found occasionally in the Lebanon range, but lions, though at one time numerous, have entirely disappeared.

XII

THE SWEETNESS OF THE BRIDE

3; 3[1]

4, 9-11 (*Lover*) Thou hast ravished my heart, [2]
With a glance of thine eyes.
With a turn [3] of thy neck. [4]
10 How fair is thy love, my sister,[5]
How much sweeter thy love than wine!
Thy perfume [6] is above all spices,
And thy garments are like the fragrance of
Lebanon. [7]
Sweetness distils from thy lips,
And honey [8] is under thy tongue. [9]

[1] I take these three verses as a separate song, though an editor wished to connect them with the preceding. See the following note.

[2] *i.e.*, thou hast deprived me of my reason, made me mad with love. We would say "Thou hast stolen my heart." The editor who wished to indicate that the address is to the same bride as in v. 8, repeated "Thou hast ravished me" and added "my sister, my bride." See further note 5.

[3] Literally: "With one of thy eyes," *i.e.*, with a single side glance—a pretty conceit on the part of an impassioned lover.

[4] The very curious term in the text seems to be a designation of "neck muscles" and this led a commentator to add the word "neck" as a comment. "With one of thy neck muscles" would, therefore, parallel "one of thy eyes" and both expressions convey the picture of a flirting maiden who with a twist of her neck gives her lover a captivating side glance, as only a pretty maiden can.

[5] Explained by a commentator as "bride" in order again to connect the verse with the preceding one. Similarly in v. 12 and 5, 1 the same commentator presumably added "bride" to sister. In all three cases the metre reveals the addition; and this is confirmed by "bride" being attached to "my sister" without a conjunctive particle. The translation, "my sister, my bride" as in our English versions, is misleading since the Hebrew text has merely "bride" and not "my bride." In modern Palestinian love songs the bride is frequently addressed as "sister" (cf. Dalman, *Palästinischer Diwan*, p. 13) and the same is the case in the love poetry of the ancient Egyptians (W. Max Müller, *Die Liebespoesie der Alten Aegypter*, Nos. 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, etc.). It is hardly necessary to assume that this term of endearment points to a custom, widespread in the East, of marriages between brothers and sisters, though we know that this was common in Egypt (W. Max Müller, ib., p. 9) A prudish editor of a love song would, however, fear a literal interpretation and therefore hastened to attach the word "bride" to reassure his readers that a perfectly proper relationship is meant. See further the note on "brother," 8, 1. (Song No. xx).

[6] Literally "thy oils" in the sense of "thy perfumes" to which a commentator added the word "fragrance." In this form, "the fragrance of thy oils," the phrase was quoted 1, 3 (Song

No. 1). See the note on the passage. The addition "fragrance" makes the meaning clearer and in so far is justified, but it also gives us a superfluous beat. "Thy oils" can very well stand elliptically in poetry for "the fragrance of thy perfumes."

[7] In order to obtain a corresponding and appropriate second hemistich, I venture to remove the words

"Thy garments are like the fragrance of Lebanon"

from their present position at the end of v. 11 to the end of v. 10. A commentator again added "fragrance" to "thy garments" as he did in the case of "thy oils." We may feel quite sure that no poet would use the same word three times in quick succession.

[8] Literally "honey-comb" or virgin honey, in parallelism with *debash* (modern Arabic *dibs*) in the second hemistich, which is "honey syrup." A glossator again added "bride," which gives us a superfluous beat.

[9] A commentator, reminded by the use of "honey" of the conventional phrase "milk and honey," so frequent in the Pentateuch—"a land flowing with milk and honey"—and influenced perhaps by the combination of "milk and wine" in 5, 1—added the word "milk"—a good illustration of the lack of both taste and appreciation on the part of those who, in giving the songs their final form, so often mutilated charming folk-poetry by overloading a perfectly simple text. To combine the words into "sweet milk" as Haupt proposes, does not furnish a proper parallelism with "honey-comb," which shows that "honey-syrup" was the corresponding term. Moreover, "milk" would hardly suggest "sweetness" to an Oriental, but rather richness or fertility. As to these somewhat extravagant metaphors—from our Western point of view—it is sufficient to refer to the modern songs of Palestine in which the beloved is often compared to a "box of bonbons" and her spittle is declared to be sweeter than sugar.

XIII

LOVE'S SWEET FRUITAGE

3; 3[1]

4, 12-5, 1 (*Lover*) A garden enclosed is my sister,[2]
A spring [3] in a sealed fountain. [4]
15 A well of living water, [5]
Flowing from Lebanon. [6]
13 Thy supply [7] is an orchard of pomegranates,[8]
Of henna and nard. [9]
[Nard, saffron and cinnamon, with
all (scented) [10] woods;
Frankincense, myrrh, aloes,
With all precious spices.] [11]
(*Beloved*) Awake, northwind and come;
Southwind, blow upon my garden! [12]
That my love may come,
And eat its pleasant fruits. [13]
5, 1 (*Lover*) I am come to my garden, my sister; [14]
To gather my myrrh with my spice.
To eat my honey-comb with my honey;
To drink my wine with my milk. [15]

[1] A dialogue between lover and beloved. Each line consists of two hemistichs with three beats to each hemistich. The comparison of the beloved to a garden with precious fruits and choice flowers is a natural extension of the erotic symbolism of the apple, the fig, the vine, and of spices and scented woods and resins. The picture of the garden occurs again 6, 2 and 10, and also 8, 13.

[2] A commentator again adds "bride" as an explanation to "my sister."

[3] The text has *gal* for which the Greek text has *gan* "garden" as at the beginning of the line. Some Hebrew manuscripts likewise read *gan* and this reading probably superinduced the repetition of "enclosed," which is certainly out of place. The stem underlying *gal* signifies to "roll." The word may, therefore, refer to the bubbling water in a spring and hence might be a poetic term for spring, which at all events is demanded by the context.

[4] Wells in the Orient are kept covered so as to prevent pollution. The hedged-in or enclosed garden and the sealed fountain are, therefore, apt metaphors to emphasize the chastity of the beloved, secure against any intruder. Her fruits and spices, as the water, are for the enjoyment of the lover solely.

[5] A commentator adds by way of explanation "a garden fountain."

[6] Verse 15 has accidentally been misplaced. Its proper place is after v. 12. The entire verse may originally have been a variant to v. 11 or it may be a quotation from another song which some editor considered to be an appropriate addition, and which was inserted at a wrong point.

[7] Another difficult term but which would seem to indicate the "sending forth"—so the force of the underlying stem—of the waters of the spring to supply the orchard of pomegranates, etc.

[8] The word used, *pardes*—our "paradise"—is taken over from the Persian *paradeiza*, and designates a park or grove. The two other passages in the Old Testament in which the word occurs—Neh. 2, 8 and Ecc. 2, 5—confirm the obvious conclusion of its introduction as a loan word after the contact of the Jews with Persia. Like the Greek word *appiryôn* (above, note 12 to Song No. IX), the introduction of a Persian word would, therefore, point to the late redaction of the collection as a whole. Some commentator in order to suggest that the "grove of

pomegranates" is to be connected with the "choice fruits" in the response of the beloved in v. 16 adds by way of explanation "with its choice fruits."

[9] Plural forms of henna flowers and nard are used here—quite exceptionally and probably for the sake of the metre. On henna see above, note 8 to Song No. IV; on nard, note 11.

[10] The text has "all the woods of frankincense" but that is clearly impossible. The word "frankincense" begins the next line and some word has dropped out after "woods"—perhaps we are to supply *kaneh*, which has the general sense of a "sweet-smelling reed" and which was accidentally placed between "saffron" and "cinnamon" in our line.

[11] These two double lines with their long array of aromatic spices and perfumes are probably a later addition with a view of amplifying the description of the wealth of the beloved's garden.

[12] A commentator—harking back to v. 14—adds by way of explanation "that its spices flow."

[13] The charming answer of the beloved continues the metaphor of the garden. She calls upon the north and southwind to waft the fragrance of the garden to her lover who is not slow to to follow the invitation implied.

[14] Once more the commentator adds " bride" to indicate who is meant by "sister."

[15] Wine and milk form a proper combination but not "honey and milk" as in 4, 11. See note 9 to Song No. XII. With this comparison of the delights of love to myrrh, balsam, honey, wine and milk, the little song, charming in its simplicity and naïveté comes to an end. Some commentator added:

> "Eat, friends, and drink;
> And be drunk, dear ones.

which is inappropriate here, since the lover would scarcely invite his friends to share his "garden" with him. Moreover, the double line is in a different metre—consisting of two hemistichs of two beats each. The line sounds like the refrain of a Palestinian drinking song, perhaps to be sung at weddings and introduced here by some one because of the reference to eating and drinking in our garden song,

XI

ANOTHER SWEET DREAM

3; 2 [1]

5, 2-8 (*Beloved*) I was asleep, but my heart [2] was awake.
Hark, my beloved is knocking;
"Open to me, my sister, my darling,
My dove, my perfect one.
For my head is filled with dew;
My locks [3] with drops [4] of the night."
I have put off my tunic, [5]
How shall I put it on?
I have washed my feet,
How shall I soil them? [6]
My love withdrew [7] his hand;
And my being was stirred to the depths. [8]
5 I rose to open to my beloved,
And my hands dropped with myrrh, [9]
And my fingers with the flowing myrrh,
Upon the handles of the bar.
I opened to my love,
But my love had turned away. [10]
My soul longed for his word; [11]
I called him but he did not answer me. [12]
Those who make the rounds of the city, [13]
Smote me (and) wounded me.
They stripped me of my mantle,
The guardians of the walls.

O maidens of Jerusalem, I charge you,
If you find my lover, that ye tell him, [14]
How love-sick I am.

[1] This song, one of the most beautiful in the collection, is put into the mouth of the beloved to express her longing for her lover. As in No. VIII, her thoughts are with her lover even during sleep. Hence the dream in both songs, which are therefore merely variations of the same theme, precisely as in the modern love poetry of the Arabs songs resemble one another frequently, one being suggested by the other. The poem consists of 12 lines with hemistichs of three and two beats. In the case of the third and ninth lines, there is a slight roughness. The second hemistich in the one case and the first in the other are perhaps a little too long, but such unevenness is not uncommon in folk songs and unless it is pronounced does not warrant radical emendation.

[2] *i.e.*, my mind, as the word "heart" in Hebrew always implies. Her mind "awake" means that she is dreaming.

[3] A poetic word for "locks" is used, occurring again 5, 12, but nowhere else in the Old Testament. The line gains somewhat in smoothness by omitting this word, but since it is a rare one, it cannot well be a comment, nor can it be a variant to "head," because the verb is in the singular.

[4] A word occurring only here, though the infinitive is found —likewise only once—in Ezek. 46, 14 "to moisten" the fine flour. One might omit "night" as already implied in "drippings."

[5] The reply to the fancied appeal of the lover. Her tunic is her only garment. People in the ancient Orient slept naked, and for that matter in western countries as late as the days of Shakespeare.

[6] Teasingly she says to her lover that it is too late to let him in, and the lover, to her dismay, takes her at her word and withdraws—all, of course, in her dream.

[7] By a slight change we obtain "withdrew" instead of "stretched" which presents a more vivid picture of her justified fear that her lover was not there. Some commentator added "from the hole" by way of explanation, as though the lover had stretched his hand through a hole in the door. But why should the door have a hole, as Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, Vol. 7, p. 12, supposes?

[8] Literally "my bowels were moved for him"—the expressive (though not aesthetic) phrase in Hebrew for a strong emotion.

[9] The myrrh with which her lover is perfumed and which, in her vivid dream, she imagines that he left on the door as a mark of his presence.

[10] The word used being a rare one—there are only two further instances of the stem in the Old Testament—a commentator added the common word for "to be gone."

[11] Literally: "My soul went out for his speaking" or by a different vocalization "for his word," which, as Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, Vol. 7, p. 13, suggests, has the force of "I would give my soul for a word with him."

[12] Another preceding hemistich reading:

"I sought him but did not find him."

I take as a variant to

"I called him but he did not answer me."

Both got into the text with the result of giving us a hemistich without a corresponding one. One of these hemistichs—and according to the Greek version both—was then transferred from our passage to Song No. VIII (3, 1) and used as a refrain. See the note to the two verses.

[13] A variant—or perhaps a comment— "the watchman" likewise slipped into the text, giving us a superfluous beat.

[14] The line does not read smoothly. Perhaps we should omit "him" which is, of course, implied.

The particle (*mah*) does not introduce a question, as our English translations have it, but is to be rendered "that." So Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, Vol. 7, p. 13.

XV

THE BEAUTY OF THE LOVER

2; 2[1]

5, 9-16(*Maidens*) What is thy lover more than another,
O fairest of women?
What is thy lover more than any other,
That thus thou dost charge us?
(*Beloved*) My beloved is fair [2] and ruddy; [3]
Distinguished [4] among myriads.
His head is (as) fine gold;
His locks as branches. [5]
His eyes are doves, [6]
By streams of water;
Washed [7] with milk,
At a brimming pool, [8]
His cheeks [9] a bed [10] of spices,
Exhaling [11] sweet perfumes.
His lips are (as) lilies,
Dripping with flowing myrrh, [12]
His arms [13] are rods of gold,
Studded with rubies. [14]
His body a column [15] of ivory,
Adorned with sapphires. [16]
His legs are pillars of marble, [17]
Set upon sockets of fine gold.
His aspect is like Lebanon,
Majestic as cedars. [18]

His mouth is sweetness, [19]
And his whole being lovely, [20]
This is my lover,
And this is my friend; [21]
Ye maidens of Jerusalem.

[1] Consisting of 14 lines with hemistichs of two beats to each line. This song—a second specimen of a *wasf* (see above, note 1 to Song No. x) this time describing the lover—is introduced by two double lines, in which the beloved is addressed by the maidens of Jerusalem.

[2] Or "white," used of milk (Lam. 4, 6) "shining" of heat (Is. 18, 4) "pure" of speech (Is. 32, 4).

[3] Bronzed by the sun, yet fair of skin.

[4] More literally "looked up to," from a stem the meaning of which in Hebrew is determined by its usage in Assyrian.

[5] *Taltallim*, occurring only here and for which we now have the Assyrian equivalent *taltallu* "palm branch" (Muss-Arnolt, *Assryrian Dictionary*, p. 1165[c] and 249[c]). The long tresses are compared to waving palm branches and since the latter are dark, a commentator, seizing upon this resemblance added "black as a raven." In Arabic poetry, the tresses of the beloved are likewise compared to palm branches (Jacob, *Altarabisches Bedouinenleben* 2nd ed. pp. 46-47).

[6] Occurring also in the *wasf* of the beloved (4, 1 Song No. x).

[7] Read, by a different vocalization, the passive participle.

[8] Note the comparison of the eyes of the beloved in another *wasf* (7, 5, Song No. xviii) to the limpid "pools of Heshbon."

[9] It is true, as Haupt (*Book of Canticles*, p. 39) points out, that the corresponding word in Arabic means the beard on the cheek and chin, but this is merely an expansion of the original meaning of the word "cheek," applied in the Old Testament to women as well as to men. The reference is to the sweet perfume of his face, hardly to the downy covering, which the girl might admire but scarcely compare to a "bed of spices." The thought is the same as in Dalman, *Palästinischer Diwan*, p. 223, where the cheek of the beloved is called a "bunch of roses."

[10] Some Hebrew manuscripts read the plural "beds" as 6, 2.

[11] The reading of the text is "towers" which is not improved by rendering "banks." By a different vocalization, we obtain "sprouting," "producing," and this is clearly what is meant to emphasize the sweetness that is exhaled by the perfumed lover. Throughout our collection of songs, perfumes of which Orientals have always been fond are prominently dwelt upon, *e.g.*, 1, 12-14 3, 6, 4, 10-11; 13-14 etc.

[12] As above, 5, 5 (Song No. xiv).

[13] Literally "hands," but poetically used for "arms."

[14] Text has "Tarshish," generally identified with Tartessus

in Spain, though there may have been another place nearer Palestine of the same name. The identification of the "Tarshish" stone is doubtful; beryl, topaz, chrysolite are among the explanations suggested. If the arms are of a golden color, it would seem natural to assume that by "studded with Tarshish" reddish spots on the skin are meant. Tarshish may therefore be used for a ruby of some kind. Haupt (*Book of Canticles*, p. 40) identifies Tarshish with crystallized cinnabar. I cannot agree with him in thinking that tattooing of the arms is referred to here. We must not press poetic metaphors by a too realistic interpretation. The comparison is clearly with the mixed golden and reddish color of the bronzed arms.

[15] The word in the text (*esheth*) occurs in this passage only and is presumably a loan word from the Assyrian *isitu* (Muss-Arnolt, *Assyrian Dictionary*, p. 77[b]) which means "column."

[16] The word in the text *sappir* is identical with our sapphire, but the stone meant here, as Haupt points out, is not our sapphire, which is corundum, but lapis lazuli or azure stone—of a rich ultramarine blue color. Haupt again assumes that tattooing of the body is meant and points to references to tattooing in modern Palestinian love songs. Even if we suppose that tattooing was common in ancient Palestine, certainly there is no reason to assume that the arms and body were covered with designs.

[17] Similarly in Arabic poetry, the legs are compared to columns of marble (Jacob, *Das Hohe Lied*, p. 40).

[18] Note the synonymity of Lebanon with cedars.

[19] Occurring only here and Neh. 8, 10—in the latter passage used of "sweet drinks."

[20] *Desideria*—often used with "eyes" to denote "delight of one's eyes"—something exceedingly precious.

[21] We have a similar conclusion to a modern Arabic (Dalman *Palästinischer Diwan*, p. 112). "Such is the description of the fair one—without a blemish."

XVI

LOVE'S GARDEN

3; 2 [1]

6, 1-3 and 11 (*Maidens*) Whither is thy love gone,
Fairest of women?
Whither has thy love turned,
That we may seek him with thee?
(*Beloved*) My love is gone down to his garden,
To the beds [2] of spices.
[He has gone] [3] to feed in the gardens,
And to gather lilies. [4]
I am my love's and my love is mine,
Who feeds among the lilies;
11, 5 (*Lover*) I am gone down into the garden of fruits, [6]
To look at the shoots [7] in the valley,
To see whether the vine has blossomed,
And the pomegranates have budded. [8]

[1] A continuation in a measure of the preceding song so that Nos. XIV-XVI might be taken together. And yet each is also independent as shown by the change in the metre. One suspects that they have been placed together by some editor who may have added the connecting links. The lines in No. XVI consist of hemistichs of three and two beats. The song has close affiliations with No. XIII, treating the same theme, but in different fashion.

[2] One might also read the singular as in 5, 13, but the plural is probably intentional, because of the plural "gardens" in the next line, to express an abundance of spices and a large or magnificent garden—as the plural is often used in Hebrew. The Greek version reads the plural in both passages. The garden and the bed of spices are, of course, the sweet and perfumed maiden.

[3] Some verb is needed to complete the three beats. To "feed" is to be taken in the sense of enjoying the delights of the garden. See above note to 2, 16. (Song No. VII, Note 3).

[4] The word for lily, *shusanna*, gives us our proper name Susanna or Susan and of which Lily, as a proper name, is a translation.

[5] This stanza of four lines (v. 11 in the text) has by some chance slipped out of its proper place, as has also v. 10. See below Note 2 to Song No. XVII. This sixth chapter appears to have suffered more than any other—with the possible exception of the eighth—by re-editing, as may be concluded, also, from the insertion of 5 -7, which is taken over from 4, 1-3.

[6] The Greek version adds from 7, 13

"There, I gave thee my love"

—a further indication of the liberties taken with the text.

[7] The word occurs once more (but in the singular) Job 8, 12. See the author's *Book of Job*, p. 224, note 61, for the explanation of the latter passage.

[8] Vine and pomegranate—both erotic symbols—appear again in juxtaposition in 8, 3 (Song No. XX).

XVII

BEAUTIFUL BEYOND COMPARE

3; 2[1]

6, 10. 4-9 (*Lover*) Who is this who looks forth like the dawn,
10[2] Fair as the moon,
Striking awe as a bannered host,[3]
Bright as the sun?
4 Thou art fair, my darling, as Tirzah,[4]
Comely as Jerusalem.[5]
5 Turn away thine eyes from me,
For they overpower me.[6]
[Thy hair is like a flock of goats,
That trail from Gilead.
Thy teeth like a flock of ewes,[7]
That have come up from the washing,
All of them bearing twins,
And none of them barren.[8]
Thy lips are like a scarlet thread,
And thy mouth comely.[9]
Thy temple is like a slice of pomegranate,
Behind thy veil].
8 Three score are the queens,[10]
And maidens[11] without number;
But one is my dove, my perfect one;
Pure[12] to the one who bore her.
Maidens see her and bless her,
Queens[13]—and they praise her.[14]

[1] Double lines with hemistichs of three and two beats.

[2] I venture to transpose v 10. from its position, where it has no connection with either what precedes or with what follows, to form the introduction to the lover's passionate outburst. Such transpositions are always possible in a collection of little songs loosely strung together, but a sound critical method demands that we must have recourse to a conjectural arrangement only as a last resource and only when the attempt to interpret a line of a stanza in the place where it stands fails.

[3] It is necessary to invert the second double line, so as to get three beats for the first distich and two beats for the second. The picture is that of the advancing bridal procession as in Song No. IX, with the bride surrounded by an escort of friends of the bridegroom, armed like warriors, and which with the usual exaggeration is enlarged to that of an army, marching with banners flying.

[4] The name of the fortress city in the northern kingdom and which was for a time (c. 930 to 880 B. C.) the official capital. See Hastings *Dictionary of the Bible*, s. v. The juxtaposition with Jerusalem points to the origin of this particular stanza at a time when Tirzah occupied the same position in the north that Jerusalem did in the south. Since Tirzah means pleasing, graceful and the like, the Greek version takes the word as a common noun and renders *eudokia* as "a beautiful structure." Curiously enough, the Jewish commentator Rashi follows this interpretation, which would indeed be possible were it not that the parallelism with Jerusalem calls for some proper name to correspond.

[5] The text adds at this point

"Striking awe as a bannered host"

which may be due to a commentator, to suggest that the phrase in question was intended to describe Jerusalem, but more likely is a trace of the original position of v. 10 which ends with this phrase. Certainly something has gone wrong with the text at this point.

[6] The beauty of the bride surrounded by her impressive and awe-inspiring escort is too much for the lover. The little song ends here but the mention of the eyes of the beloved suggested to some editor the insertion of the *wasf* from 4, 1-3 (Song No. X). I have, therefore, enclosed the insertion in brackets.

[7] A variant reading for "ewes ready to be shorn" in 4, 2. (Song No. X).

[8] It will be recalled (see above, Note 6 to Song No. X) that these two lines are probably a comment on the part of someone

who thought that the comparison was to the splendid condition of the teeth, whereas the point is their whiteness, like the fleece of sheep that have just been washed.

[9] This double line—not in the Hebrew text—is added by the Greek version from 4, 3. (Song No. x)

[10] If we remove the insertion (verses 5^b-7), three double lines (verses 8-9) form an appropriate close to the enthusiastic praise of the incomparable beauty of the beloved, whom the lover places above queens and all maidens of the harem. The thought of the closing stanza is very much the same that we find in 8, 11-12 (Song No. xxiii) where the lover expresses his preference for his little vineyard as against the choicest estate of royalty. You may have your queens and maidens, he exclaims. Give me the one who is unique—"my dove, my perfect one"—the only one of the kind ever born to a mother. The number 60 is introduced as a large number precisely as in 3, 7 (Song No. ix) with the sixty warriors. Therefore, the parallel says "without number." A variant to "sixty queens" reads "eighty concubines" and this variant, creeping as usual into the text, gives us a superfluous hemistich. The commentator who added the variant to the text may have had in mind the picture of Solomon's household with his 700 wives and 300 cucubines (I Kings 11, 3).

[11] The word used for "maiden" (*almāh*) is the same as in the first song (1, 3), the reference being no doubt to the younger girls in the harem, serving as attendants to the queens as well as concubines to do the pleasure of their royal lord. The Hebrew term is used as a synonym for "virgin" (*bethûlāh*), though also extended to the "young wife" as in the famous passage Is. 7, 14.

[12] "Pure to her mother" in the sense of remaining chaste, and faithful to her mother's teachings, whereas in v. 10 it is used of the sun— "lustrous!" Again in Ps. 19, 9. "The commandment of Yahweh is pure." A commentator taking pure in the sense of "single, unique" added as an explanation of the hemistich:

"She is one to her mother."

The poet adds to the uniqueness and perfection of his beloved the quality of being also chaste in body and mind.

[13] The variant, "eighty concubines," inserted here (see above note 10), superinduced the addition of "concubines" also at this point, which, however, makes the hemistich too long. Clearly "maidens" as here used covers the idea of "concubines."

[14] For verse 10, see the beginning of our song, whereas v. 11 belongs to the previous song. See above, note 4 to Song No. XVI. The last verse of our chapter has occasioned endless difficulties to students. The ordinary translation:

"Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib"

yields no sense and besides cannot be justified grammatically. Nor is the translation improved by the rendering in the Bible of the Jewish Publication Society, which takes *amminadib* not as a proper name but as composed of two words meaning "my princely people." The verse would then read:

"Before I was aware, my soul set me upon the chariots of my princely people."

How can one's soul be put upon chariots? It is clear that one is led from one absurdity to another by adhering to the received text with the rigidity of an infallible dogma. It is better to confess the hopelessness of the text than to present an impossible translation to a lay public unable to control the original text. The first three words read literally:

"I do not know myself"

and it is quite likely, as suggested by Haupt and others, that they represent the very sensible comment of some reader, who was franker than many modern translators in confessing that he did not know what was meant by the verse. Now if we remove these words, there remain of the 12th verse, three words,

(a) She set me (b) chariots (c) Amminadib.

I take the three words as separate glosses that have been corrupted in the endeavor of some uncritical editor to combine them into a connected sentence; and this attempt turned out so badly as to prompt some honest reader to confess that he did not know what was meant. Then to add to the confusion, this confession was also added to the text. See further Note 6 to Song No. XVIII.

XVIII

DANCE OF THE BRIDE

3; 2[1]

7, 1-10 (*Lover*) Turn, [2] turn, O Shulamite,
or Chorus) Turn that we may gaze on thee!
Ah! Gaze on the Shulamite, [3]
In the dance of the camp! [4]
How beautiful are thy steps in sandals, [5]
..... O nobleman's daughter! [6]
The roundings of thy hips are like necklaces, [7]
The work of a master. [8]
Thy navel is like a covered [9] bowl,
In which the mixture is not wanting. [10]
Thy belly is a heap of wheat,
Set about with lilies. [11]
Thy breasts [12] are like two fawns,
Twins of a gazelle.
5 Thy neck like a tower of ivory, [13]

* * * *

Thy eyes are pools in Heshbon, [14]
At the gate of Bath-Rabbim.
Thy nose is like a Lebanon peak, [15]
Looking towards Damascus.
Thy head upon thee is like crimson, [16]
And the curl [17] of thy head like purple. [18]
(*Lover*) How fair and how lovely art thou,
O love with (its) delights! [19]

Thy [20] stature is like a palm,
And thy breasts like clusters. [21]
I said, "Let me climb the palm; [22]
Let me take hold of its tops," [23]
And may thy breasts be like clusters [24]
And thy fragrance [25] as apples [26]
And thy mouth like good wine [27]
Stirring my lips. [28]
(*Beloved*) [I am my love's and my love is mine;
And to me is his desire.] [29]

[1] Hemistichs of three and two beats to each line. We owe to Wetzstein in Franz Delitzsch's *Commentary to the Song of Songs*, p. 171, the explanation that this song starts out with a reference to the custom still observed in parts of modern Palestine of having the bride dance on her wedding day, brandishing a sword in her right hand and a handkerchief in her left. Such dances are always accompanied by songs. Dalman in his collection of modern Palestinian songs (*Palästinischer Diwan*, pp. 254-261) gives some specimens of songs sung by a chorus of women as the bride dances with torches in both hands. This is evidently a modification of the custom described by Wetzstein. Our song, which passes over into a *wasf*, is apparently placed in the mouth of the lover, though the first six verses might also be appropriate if sung by a chorus of friends of the bridegroom or by a chorus of maidens—the attendants and friends of the bride—with the bridegroom taking up the theme in verses 7-10.

[2] The Oriental dance consists largely of the swaying of the body forward and backward with the turning of the head from one side to the other. The lover—or the chorus—calls upon the maiden to dance. The ordinary rendering "return" is entirely out of place and spoils the meaning of the song.

[3] Shulamite, *i.e.*, a maiden from the village of Shulam or Shunem. The two forms are used interchangeably. Outside of our passage, the reading is always Shunemite (I Kings 1, 3, 15; 2, 17, 21, 22, II Kings 4, 12, 25) and Shunem (Jos. 19, 18; I Sam. 28, 4; II Kings 4, 8). Some of the codices of the Greek translation—*e.g.*, the codex Vaticanus—also have the spelling with *n* instead of *l* as in our passage. The modern name of the village, situated south of Nazareth, is *Sôlem*, which points perhaps to the recension of our song at a time when the form with *l* had become the current one and replaced the earlier one with *n*. It is from Shunem that the attendants of the aging David fetch an attractive young girl—Abishag—to warm his heart (I Kings 1, 1-5). The story impresses one as a folk-tale, originally told to celebrate the beauty of the women of Shunem. They sought for a fair damsel throughout all the borders of Israel and found Abishag. Shunem held the prize beauties. Shunemite or Shulamite, therefore, became a term to designate a beautiful maiden. It is so used in our passage. No particular maiden from Shulam is intended. This explanation disposes of all theories which would identify the beloved throughout the Song of Songs with one and the same maiden, known as Sulamith or the Shulamite.

[4] The ordinary translation

"What will ye see in the Shulamite?"

can hardly be correct and if anything were needed to reenforce this view, the translation of the line immediately following, as given in the Bible of the Jewish Publication Society:

"As it were a dance of two companies"

would serve as another illustration how an ancient composition can be made meaningless by an unwillingness to apply a critical method to a text that obviously stands in need of correction. The word translated "two companies" must be vocalized to read "camps" which is the reading of the Greek version. Instead of "as" we must read, by the slightest kind of a change in the Hebrew letter, "in." The "dance in the camp," *i.e.*, a dance or a "round" in the camp, may have been the technical name for the sword dance of the bride, which would be danced by the bride in the presence of those who form the camp; or the term "camp dance" may have been a more general designation. The first hemistich cannot be a question but is rather an appeal to look at the beautiful and peaceful maiden and to join in the enthusiasm of the lover or of the chorus to admire her as she performs her dance in the camp. I therefore follow Haupt (*Book of Canticles*, p. 57) in regarding the initial particle *mâh* as an appeal. It is not necessary to omit the word *zôth* "this." The two particles *mâh zôth* with what follows would have the force "Just look at this!" "Do gaze upon the Shulamite." "See how beautiful she is, how graceful!"

[5] Haupt may be right in rendering "chopines," and in assuming that the maiden puts on wooden clogs (See Dalman, *Palästinischer Diwan*, p. 257) rather than sandals when dancing, though according to Wetzstein, (*Zeits. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesell.*, Vol. 22, p. 106) the dance to-day is performed at some places in her bare feet. But "chopines" is not a poetical word and besides, the lover in his enthusiasm idealizes everything about his bride. She is a queen to him, and therefore in his eyes the wooden clogs become fashionable sandals.

[6] By a happy chance we find precisely the same address to the bride in a modern Palestinian song, sung while the bride is dancing, *bint el-akbar*, "Nobleman's daughter" (Dalman, *Palästinischer Diwan*, p. 257). Correspondingly (ib., p. 260) the groom is addressed as a "nobleman's son." The Hebrew text *bath nadîb* is just a little too short for two beats and there-

fore some commentator suggested as a variant *bath ammi nadîb* which would convey the idea of "daughter of a noble people"—quite as appropriate as the other and having much the same force. By an error this variant *ammi-nadîb* for *nadîb* slipped in at the wrong place (6, 12. See also note 15 to Song No. XVII) and, combined with other glosses, gave rise to further confusion.

[7] See Hos. 2, 15 (2, 13 in AV) and Prov. 25, 12 where the same word as in the text stands in juxtaposition with a "ring;" it probably means a necklace. The ecstatic lover compares the graceful twistings of the hips of the dancing bride, as she sways and turns from side to side, to twisted neck chains.

[8] The term used designates an artisan.

[9] The word occurs in this form (*sahar*) in this passage only, but it is related to *sōhar* which in the combination *beth ha-sōhar* (Gen. 39, 20-23) means "prison." The underlying stem, therefore, must have the meaning "to cover," "to enclose." The word rendered "bowl" occurs in two other passages (Ex. 24, 6 and Is. 22, 24). It appears to be a loan word from the Babylonian.

[10] The allusion is erotic, though as we must always bear in mind in the case of a folk-song, naïvely and not obscenely erotic.

[11] Again a naïvely frank allusion, which requires no comment.

[12] Omit "two," as above 4, 5 (Song No. X). It is evident verses 4-5 of our song are variants of 4, 4-5. The order of the *wasf* in Song No. X is from the head downwards (eyes, hair, teeth, lips, mouth, neck, breasts), whereas in our song the order is from the feet upwards (feet, hips, navel, belly, breasts, neck, eyes, nose, head). Haupt's proposed inversion of the verses (8, 6, 5, 10, 7, 3) is entirely unnecessary.

[13] The corresponding hemistich is missing, but perhaps the line is to be taken as a variant to

"Thy nose is like a Lebanon tower." See note 14.

[14] In Moab to the east of Jordan—the modern Hesbān. Beth-rabbim must have been the name of one of the gates of the city near which the pools lay. Traces of pools and of water conduits have been found on the site of Heshbon.

[15] Text has "tower" but, as Haupt (*Book of Canticles*, p. 28) recognized, a promontory of the Lebanon range is meant and

not a watch-tower. A poet would hardly apply the same metaphor to the neck and to the nose. In the case of the neck (as 4, 5 and 7, 5), the largeness of the neck suggests the comparison with "a tower of David" and its whiteness with "a tower of ivory." In the case of the nose it is its prominence, sticking out on the face like a promontory that is the basis of the comparison. In confirmation of this explanation, one may point to the usage in Arabic where a promontory is called a "nose." As already suggested (above, Note 10 to Song No. x), the Orientals regard large features and in general large proportions—large necks, prominent breasts, large hips, etc.—as marks of beauty.

[16] The text has *Karmel* which has generally been taken by translators to be a designation for Mt. Carmel— the wooded headland rising above a narrow sea beach to a height of some 500 feet, and which as a conspicuous landmark is visible from most parts of central Palestine. The parallelism with "purple," however, suggests that a color is meant; and since we have a word *karmîl*, occurring three times (II Chron. 2, 6 and 13; 3, 14) by the side of *argaman* "purple" (as in our passage) and which is our "crimson," it is quite certain that we must by a slight change in vocalization read *karmîl* and render accordingly. So Jacob (*Das Hohe Lied*, p. 43), whom Zapletal, (*Das Hohe Lied*, p. 136) is inclined to follow. The name of the headland is derived from its purple coloring.

[17] So read by the insertion of a letter which has accidentally dropped out. The second hemistich does not read very smoothly. Perhaps we should read simply "thy curl" instead of "the curl of thy head."

[18] *Argaman* (see note 16) is a loan word from the Babylonian *argamanu*, designating a dark purple. In Greek poetry we likewise encounter the phrase "purple color" to denote the rich dark color of very thick hair. At this point there is an addition to the text which is absolutely without meaning. It consist of three words which taken together are "a king imprisoned in trenches." The words do not fit in with the metrical construction and are a perfect jumble. All attempts to force a sense have proved unavailing. We have the choice between assuming them to constitute a comment, the text of which has become corrupted beyond recovery, and regarding each word as a separate gloss, as has been suggested for the equally hopeless jumble at the close of chapter 6. See above, note 15 to

Song No. XVII. The word "king" might be another variant to *nadîb* in *bath nadîb* "daughter of a nobleman" (above v. 2. See note 9) to suggest a reading "a king's daughter," *i.e.*, a real princess. The second word (*asûr*) "imprisoned" (or "shut in") may have been added in the margin as an explanation of *sahar* "enclosed" in the combination "enclosed bowl," since the stem *asar* "to enclose" is common and *sahar* is rare. The third word is a puzzle and it is better to confess oneself baffled by what is probably a corrupted word than to add another to the many unhappy conjectures that have been made. Fortunately, since the words clearly represent an extraneous addition, it is not really important for the interpretation of our song whether we can explain the addition or not.

[19] Cheyne's proposal (Jewish *Quarterly Review*, 11, p. 407) to divide the last word of the line into two, "daughter" and "joy," is favored by the Greek version as well as by the Syriac and has been accepted by Haupt (*Book of Canticles*, p. 58). The combination is, however, very awkward and rather artificial. Since we have several passages (Micah 1, 16 and 2, 9) where the word as in our text occurs, and we also have a feminine form of the word in Ecc. 2, 8, I see no reason for questioning the correctness of the text and taking the phrase "love with delights" as another ecstatic exclamation of the lover transported beyond all bounds with joy.

[20] Omit "this" at the beginning of the line, which is the addition of some pedantic commentator and makes the hemistich too long.

[21] *i.e.*, of dates.

[22] Again an erotic allusion.

[23] The word—occurring in this passage only—should be vocalized *sinsinnam*, for it is evidently again a loan word from the Babylonian, where we have *sissinnu* which designates the top branches of the palm or its stadices. See Muss-Arnolt, *Assyrian Dictionary*, p. 775[a].

[24] A commentator adds "vine" which is probably what is meant by "clusters" here, but which must be implied, since the addition makes the hemistich too long.

[25] Literally "the fragrance of thy nose" which appears to be an elaboration of an original text

"May thy nose be as apples"

in the sense of thy breath. By a slight textual change we can obtain "thy mouth" instead of "thy nose" which is perhaps a better reading. The meaning in any case is clear.

[26] Again a juxtaposition "vine" and "apples" (see above, Notes 9 and 11 to Song No. v) as erotic symbols. Of six occurrences of the word "apple," four are found in the Song of Songs. In a fifth passage (Joel 1, 12) vine and apple together with fig, pomegranate and palm are combined. In Arabic poetry, similarly, the fragrance of the apple suggests the beloved to the passionate lover (Jacob, *Das Hohe Lied* p. 44).

[27] A commentator or editor added "that goes down smoothly" to which a super-commentator added "to my love" to suggest that it is the lover who drinks the kisses of his bride like wine. One will recall the first line of the opening song 1, 1.

[28] The text as it stands reads "stirring the lips of sleepers," but this is nonsensical; nor is it improved by substituting "dreamers" for "sleepers." The Greek version reads "my lips and my teeth," the objection to which is that "my teeth" makes the line too long. The reading of the Greek text, however, suggests the solution of the puzzle. The text had "lips" or "my lips" with a variant "teeth." The two words were combined and the word "teeth" by a slight corruption of the text—the conjunction *waw* (and) being read as the letter *yod*—became "sleepers."

[29] This closing line impresses one as a later addition—added perhaps by the same hand which we have encountered several times in the early endeavors to connect the songs by introducing refrains at certain points. The "refrain" here recalls 2, 16 and 6, 3. See Note 3 to Song No. VII. If the line was really a part of the song, it must be placed in the mouth of the beloved, who however, throughout the song is the one addressed. The suspicion of its being a later addition is increased by the second hemistich

"To me is his desire."

which is reminiscent of 3, 16, the same word for "desire" being used, as well as the same construction. This word for "desire" occurs only in these two passages and in Gen. 4, 7 reading:

"To thee is his desire."

This is generally recognized as a misplaced gloss to 3, 16:

"Unto him is thy desire"

to suggest that it is not woman who has a desire for her husband, as 3, 16 implies, and who will therefore be ruled by him, but the contrary

"Unto thee (*i.e.*, to the woman) is his desire and thou wilt rule over him."

See Skinner, *Commentary to the Book of Genesis*, p. 107. It is not a folk poet but some littérateur acquainted with the literary form of the Genesis story who introduced the phrase into our song. Dussaud, *Cantique des Cantiques* (Paris, 1920) p. 119, note 5, also takes the line as an addition.

XIX

LOVE IN THE FIELDS

3; 2; 2 [1]

7, 12-14 (*Beloved*) Come, my love, let us go forth into the fields;
Let us lodge among the henna flowers; [2]
Let us get up early to the vineyards.
Let us see whether the vine has budded;
Its blossom has opened;
(And) the pomegranates are in flower.
There I will give my love [3] offerings to thee, [4]
Old and new,
Which I have laid up for thee. [5]

[1] Three divisions to each line with three, two and two beats.

[2] As Ewald was the first to suggest, the parallelism speaks in favor of the rendering "henna flowers" (as above 4, 13. See note 9 to Song No. XIII) and not "villages." It so happens that the two words are written alike in Hebrew. The word "village" (*kōpher;* pl. *kephārim* is distinctly a prose word in Hebrew, occurring only four times (I Sam. 6, 18; Jos. 18, 24; Neh. 6, 2; I Chr. 27, 25). Henna, vineyard and pomegranate appear here in combination as elsewhere in these songs. By a slight change, one can also read "among the vines" but the emendation is hardly necessary.

[3] The same word *dôdai* (a plural formation) as in the first song 1, 2 and 4 and in 4, 10 (Song No. XII).

[4] An addition appears at this point,

"The mandrakes give forth fragrance
And at our doors are luscious fruits."

The double line with three beats to each line does not fit into the metrical framework of our song. The addition impresses one as a snatch from some other love song which some editor inserted as appropriate. Perhaps the occurrence of *dôdai*, "my love," suggested the insertion of the word, for mandrakes *dûdā'îm* "love apples" is from the same stem. See the incident, Gen. 30, 14-17 (Leah bringing mandrakes to her husband), which rests on the widespread belief in the aphrodisiac quality of mandrakes. Cf. Löw, *Aramäische Pflanzennamen*, No. 142. The passage in Genesis and the addition to our song are the only occurrences of mandrakes in the Old Testament.

[5] She compares her lover to fruits which she has stored up to give him. In the present arrangement of v. 14, interrupted by the insertion of the double line about mandrakes and luscious fruits, there is an additional "my love" *dôdî* added by some one who wished to divide the verse into four subdivisions and give each one three beats to correspond to

"There I will give my love offerings to thee."

It is interesting as well as important to trace in this way the liberties taken with the original text by early editors and commentators whose motives and theories are thus revealed.

XX

BE MY BROTHER

3; 2[1]

8, 1-4 (*Beloved*) O that thou wert as my brother; [2]
Nursed at the breasts of my mother,
That I could meet thee in the street and kiss thee; [3]
And none would despise me.
That I might lead thee [4] to the house of my mother;
To the chamber of the one who bore me. [5]
I would give thee spiced wine [6] to drink;
(And) the juice of the pomegranate. [7]
4[8] [His left arm caressing my head;
His right one embracing me.
O maidens of Jerusalem, I charge you,
By the gazelles and hinds of the fields, [9]
Arouse ye not and disturb not
Till love is satiated.] [10]

[1] Hemistichs of three and two beats to each line.

[2] Literally "as a brother to me," which means as "one of my brothers." The song rests upon the custom of addressing the beloved or bride as "sister," which has been discussed above, note 5 to song No. XII. In return the maiden would call her swain "brother," though in our little collection we have no example of this reciprocal term of endearment which is met with in ancient Egyptian as in modern Arabic poetry. Taking this form of address as her cue, the love-sick maiden sighs—"if thou wert in reality one of my brothers, then I could give vent to my feelings without arousing comment." Alas, that she must now put a restraint on her passion for the sake of appearances and try to satisfy her longings by dreams and fancied meetings.

[3] She could kiss him in public, instead of being obliged to arrange for a clandestine meeting and then run the risk of detection.

[4] A variant reads "I might bring thee," to introduce the same verb as is used 3, 4. (Song No. VIII).

[5] So the reading of the Greek text as in the parallel passage (3, 4), for which, however, the Hebrew text has "who instructed me" as a synonym for "the one who bore me"—the mother being viewed as the one who instructs her child. We must not, however, take "instruction" too literally; it is used rather in the sense of rearing one, teaching one how to take care of oneself.

[6] As we would say "the sweetest wine."

[7] The sweet must, pressed out of pomegranates. Read the plural form. Wine and pomegranates here again as symbols of sexual pleasure. Joel 1, 5 pomegranate occurs again in parallelism with wine and Joel 4, 18 (3, 18 in AV based on Amos 9, 13) with milk. Pomegranate wine is still made in Persia and Mexico; Haupt, *Book of Canticles*, p. 32.

[8] Once more the refrain (2, 6-7 and 3, 5) is added by the commentator who wished to bring about a connection between the songs. See Note 13 to Song No. V.

[9] This hemistich is found in the Greek version which makes the parallel to 2, 6 and 3, 5 complete.

[10] Verse 5 has occasioned much difficulty to commentators, since it stands in no connection with what precedes or what follows. It consists of two divisions, independent of each other. The first part—two hemistichs of three and two beats respectively—reads:

"Who is this coming up from the meadows,
Leaning on her lover."

This is either a variant to 3, 6 (See above, Song No. IX) that has in some way become misplaced, or it is the beginning of another procession song, the continuation of which is lost. The former is the more probable conjecture. The second part of the verse, two hemistichs of three beats each, reads:

"Under the apple tree I awakened thee,
Where thy mother brought thee forth"

with a variant to the second hemistich:

"Where she that gave thee birth was in travail with thee"

This seems to be a snatch from some other song, which an editor inserted here perhaps because of the reference to apples at the close of the preceding song. At all events verse 5 consists of two isolated fragments, and we shall come across some others in this closing chapter which have slipped into the body of the text. The awakening under the apple tree is, of course, again an erotic symbol; and the allusion is made all the more unmistakable by the reference in the second hemistich. The appple tree is the sexual passion which passes from one generation to the other.

XIX

THE POWER OF LOVE

3; 2[1]

8, 5-7 (*Beloved*) Place me as a seal upon thy heart, [2]
As a seal upon thy arm;
For love is strong as death,
Firm as the grave. [3]
The darts of passion [4] are darts of fire—
Furious flames [5]
Many waters cannot quench, [6]
Nor streams devour.
If a man were to give all (his) substance, [7]
It would be as nought. [8]

[1] This little song—one of the most precious gems of the collection—consists of lines of two hemistichs of three and two beats respectively.

[2] The reference is to the Babylonian custom of wearing a seal suspended on a cord around the neck, as described by Herodotus I, §196; Gen. 38, 18 "thy seal and thy cord" shows that the custom was also known to the Hebrews. A similar metaphor is found, Prov. 3, 3, "to bind kindness and truth about one's neck." The seal on the arm, *i.e.*, on the hand, may refer to the custom—perhaps of later date when seals became smaller and shaded off into seal rings—of wearing a seal on one's right hand to be used in impressing it on a clay document as one's signature, as Jer. 22, 24 would indicate. It must be borne in mind for the full understanding of the opening line of our song that the seal was also an amulet, apart from its practical use.

[3] Sheol—the gathering-place for the dead—and here used poetically for the grave.

[4] Not "jealousy" as ordinarily translated but "passion"—zealous love. The metaphor is the same as in Psalms 76, 4, the dart shot from a bow just as we still speak of "Cupid shooting his dart."

[5] The AV recognized that the strange form conveyed the idea of "a most vehement flame." It was, therefore, no improvement when the RV accepted a traditional division of the same word into "flame" and "yah"— the latter a form of the Divine name—and rendered " a very flame of the Lord" which is retained by the translators of the American Jewish Publication Society. Besides the senselessness of a phrase like "flame of the Lord" or "flame of Yah," the Divine name cannot be attached in this way to a noun to express a more impressive meaning. See Ehrlich's remarks (*Randglossen*, Vol. 7, p. 18). It is also possible that *Yah* is a corruption for some adjective having the force of "furious" or uncontrollable. In any case, the meaning is beyond doubt.

[6] A commentator added "love" which is of course what is meant, but the word is implied since the addition of it makes the line too long.

[7] *i.e.*, "for love" as a commentator added, but which must be regarded as implied. The text has another addition "of this house"—a comment to "substance," but neither "love" nor the

other addition can be annexed to the text again without making the line too long.

[8] Literally "they would surely despise him," *i.e.*, they would make him feel that he was offering a totally insufficient return. Love is more precious than all one's wealth. Could ecstasy go further?

XXII

THE CHASTE MAIDEN

3; 2[1]

8, 8-10 (*Brothers*) We have a little sister,
And she has no breasts. [2]
What shall we do to our sister,
In the day when she shall be spoken for? [3]
If she be a wall, [4] we will build upon her
A turret [5] of silver;
And if she be a door, [6] we will enclose her
with a board of cedar. [7]

2; 2

10 (*Maiden*) I am a wall,
(Though) my breasts are like towers; [8]
So that in his eyes have I become
Like one who has found grace. [9]

[1] The song of the brothers consists of three double lines, with three and two beats; the response of the maiden of hemistichs of two beats each.

[2] *i.e.*, undeveloped breasts to indicate that she is a mere girl, not yet of marriageable age.

[3] *i.e.*, when she has reached puberty, which in the ancient Orient—and to a large extent still in the modern East—is the age at which a girl is betrothed.

[4] A metaphor for chaste, inaccessible like a wall.

[5] The word used, occurring six times in the Old Testament, designates a "circle;" and since primitive settlements were commonly circular in form, the word becomes a synonym for the court around which dwellings were erected. Inasmuch as a wall about a town was likewise circular and corresponded to the "circular" settlement, the word was extended to the circular turret raised above a wall. A turret of silver would be a decoration to a wall, like a crown to an individual. The maiden will be honored by her brothers if she remains chaste.

[6] Accessible to any one, as a door through which one passes to the interior.

[7] We will keep out intruders by boarding up the door with a plank of hardest wood.

[8] Fully developed and massive—the same metaphor as in the *wasf* songs above 4, 4 (No. x) and 7, 5 (No. xviii) and there applied to the massive necks. See Note 10 to Song No. x on the fondness of the Orientals for women with massive features, limbs and parts.

[9] The text has *shālôm*, the word for "peace" which, if taken literally, gives no sense. The stem means "to be complete" and the word may, therefore, have the force here of "perfect." In view, however, of the common Biblical expression "to find grace in one's eyes" (occurring over 30 times) it seems simplest to assume a similar meaning for *shālôm*.

XXIII

MY VINEYARD IS MINE

3; 3 [1]

8, 11-12 (*Lover*) A vineyard had Solomon [2] in Baal-Hamon; [3]
He entrusted the vineyard to guardians. [4]
For its fruit one gave a thousand; [5]
My vineyard is mine, my own. [6]
Keep the thousand, O Solomon,
And the two hundred [7] for the guardians of
its fruits.

[1] Hemistichs of three beats each.

[2] Omit the word "was" in the Hebrew text, which makes the line too long. This little song furnishes the only other instance (by the side of the "curtains of Solomon" in Song No. II) of the introduction of the name Solomon as part of the original text. Not only does the metrical construction demand the word in the first and third of the double lines, but we need Solomon as the subject to the verb "entrusted." In all other instances, as we have seen, Solomon has been added later at a time when tradition associated him with the "king" mentioned in the song. See Note 10 to Song No. IX. Our song may, therefore, have furnished the starting point for the growth of the tradition.

[3] An unknown locality for which the Greek text has Bethlamon—equally obscure. Nor is Haupt's suggestion (*Book of Canticles*, p. 33) to read Baal Hammon of much value, since this is the name of a well-known Phoenician and Carthaginian deity but not—so far as we know—the name of a locality. One suspects that the name is purely fanciful—an invention of the poet.

[4] He gave it to others to cultivate—hired for the purpose.

[5] Its fruits yielded a large income. The vineyard was cultivated for profit. A glossator adds "silver" to explain what is meant by "thousand," but "silver," again is to be implied as in the third double line; it cannot be added without making the line too long.

[6] Literally "before me," *i.e.*, at my disposal. The lover enthusiastically and passionately exclaims that his vineyard—his beloved—is his own to cultivate by himself to enjoy for himself. The beloved is more precious to him than the best of royal vineyards like the one at Baal-Hamon whose fruitage yields such a large profit. What cares the lover for lucre, when he can enjoy the fruitage of his vineyard? "Keep your money, King Solomon. My vineyard is mine. I do not sell its fruits for others to enjoy. Nor have I any need of guardians who must be paid for their services."

[7] 200 is one-fifth of a thousand or 20% which appears to be the percentage given to the keeper or guardians. Twenty per cent. was also the regular amount of interest in Babylonia, and there is generally a close connection between interest and what we would call commission percentage. The next verse appears

to be again a snatch of some song, perhaps a part of the song to which 8, 5 (see Note 10 to Song No. XXI), belongs. It reads:

"Thou who dwellest in the gardens,
With companions listening;
Let me hear thy voice."

The line consists of three divisions of two beats each. Perhaps it was added here at the close because of the reference to vineyards in the last song. Finally, the hand of the editor, who tried to connect the songs is again to be seen in the addition of a refrain, which is a variant to 2, 17 and 4, 6.

"Flee, my love, and be like
To a gazelle or a young fawn,
Upon the mountains of spices."

See Note 3 to Song No. VII and Note 17 to Song No. X for the allusion contained in the "mountain of spices." For the sake of convenience I put the fragments of songs introduced into the collection and the interspersed refrains together.

FRAGMENTS [1]

Eat, friends, and drink,
And be drunk dear ones.
(5, 1[c].)

The mandrakes give forth fragrance,
And at our doors are luscious fruits.
(7, 13.)

Who is this coming from the meadows leaning
on her love?
(8, 5[a].)

Under the apple-tree I awakened thee,
There where thy mother brought thee forth.
[Variant: There where she that gave thee
birth was in travail with thee]
(8, 5.[b])

Thou who dwellest in the gardens,
With companions listening;
Let me hear thy voice.
(8, 13.)

[1] See the notes to the passages indicated for detailed explanations.

REFRAINS

His left hand caressing my head;
And his right one embracing me.

(2, 6; 8, 4.)

O maidens of Jerusalem, I charge you,
By the gazelles and hinds of the field,
Arouse ye not and disturb not,
Until love is satiated.

(2, 7; 3, 5; cf. 5, 8.)

Till the morning blows,
And the shadows flee,
Turn thou and be like
To a gazelle, my love,
Or like a young fawn
(On the mountains of myrrh.)

(2, 17; cf., also, 2, 9 for partial insertion.)

(*Variant*) Till the morning blows,
And the shadows flee,
I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
And to the hillock of frankincense.

(4, 6.)

(*Variant*) Flee, my love and be like
To a gazelle or a young fawn,
On the mountains of spices.

(8, 14.)

My love is mine and I am his
Who feeds among the lilies.

(2, 16; 6, 3.)

(*Addition*) I am my love's (and my love is mine)
And to me is his desire.
(7, 11.)
Ah, thou art fair, my darling;
Ah, thou art fair.
(1, 15; 4, 1^{a}.)

Note also the direct transfer with some changes of

4, 1^{c} to 5, 12^{a}
4, 1^{c}-3 to 6, 5^{b}-7
4, 5 to 7, 4

and compare

Like a tower of David thy neck (4, 4^{a}.)

with

Like a tower of ivory thy neck (7, 5^{a}.)

and

Like a tower of Lebanon thy nose. (7, 5^{c}.)

Extracts in English Translation from Gustav Dalman's "Palaestinischer Diwan" (Leipzig, 1901)

(Page 193) The bridegroom is the light of the moon,
With the sun adjoining,
His bride is the light of the morning,
Passing all in beauty.

(Page 205) Oh fair one, make a wager with me,
If you win, take me,
If I win, I will take thee;
If you win, take me,
Make me a silver chain,
Placed on thy breast.

(Page 224) Oh thou fair one, whose cheeks are beauty and grace,
Thou hast captured with thy beautiful traits,
The men of reason and grace.

* * * * * * * * * *

Wert thou to say to me "die,"
I would find death easier
Than separation from thee for an hour,
Oh fair one of grace.

(Page 241) My beloved, thy beauty has wounded me,
When the light of thy countenance shone,
Oh full moon, thou hast bereft me of reason.
Oh for the misfortune that has come upon thine eyes.

Dance of the Bride

(Page 256) Step hither in the name of Allah
Thou fair one,
Thou rose in a garden of flowers,
The pinks, oh Bride,
And the jasmine are over us.

* * * * * * * * *

The daughter of the noble dances with two candles,
Rise up, mount to the high palace,
By the light of thy father, oh precious.

(Page 308) Thy black eyes wound me,
All the beauty of the world is gathered to thee,
The maidens of the city come to compare themselves with thee,
None are there like thee,
None is equal to thee.

(Page 100) The eyebrows of my beloved
Are like the line of a stylus, drawn with ink,
And the hair of his forehead like the feathers of birds dyed with henna.
His nose is like a handle of an Indian sword glittering,
His teeth like pebbles of hail and more beautiful,
His cheeks like apples of Damascus,
His breasts beautiful pomegranates,
His neck like the neck of the antelope,
His arms staffs of pure silver,
His finger golden pencils.

Her teeth are like pearls,
Her neck like the neck of the antelope,
Her shoulders are firm,
The work of a master;
Her navel is like a box of perfumes,
With all spices streaming therefrom,
Her body like strains of silk,
Her limbs like firm pillars, etc.

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